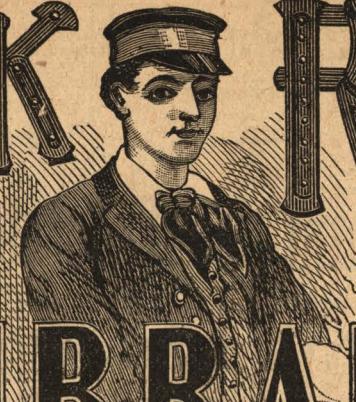


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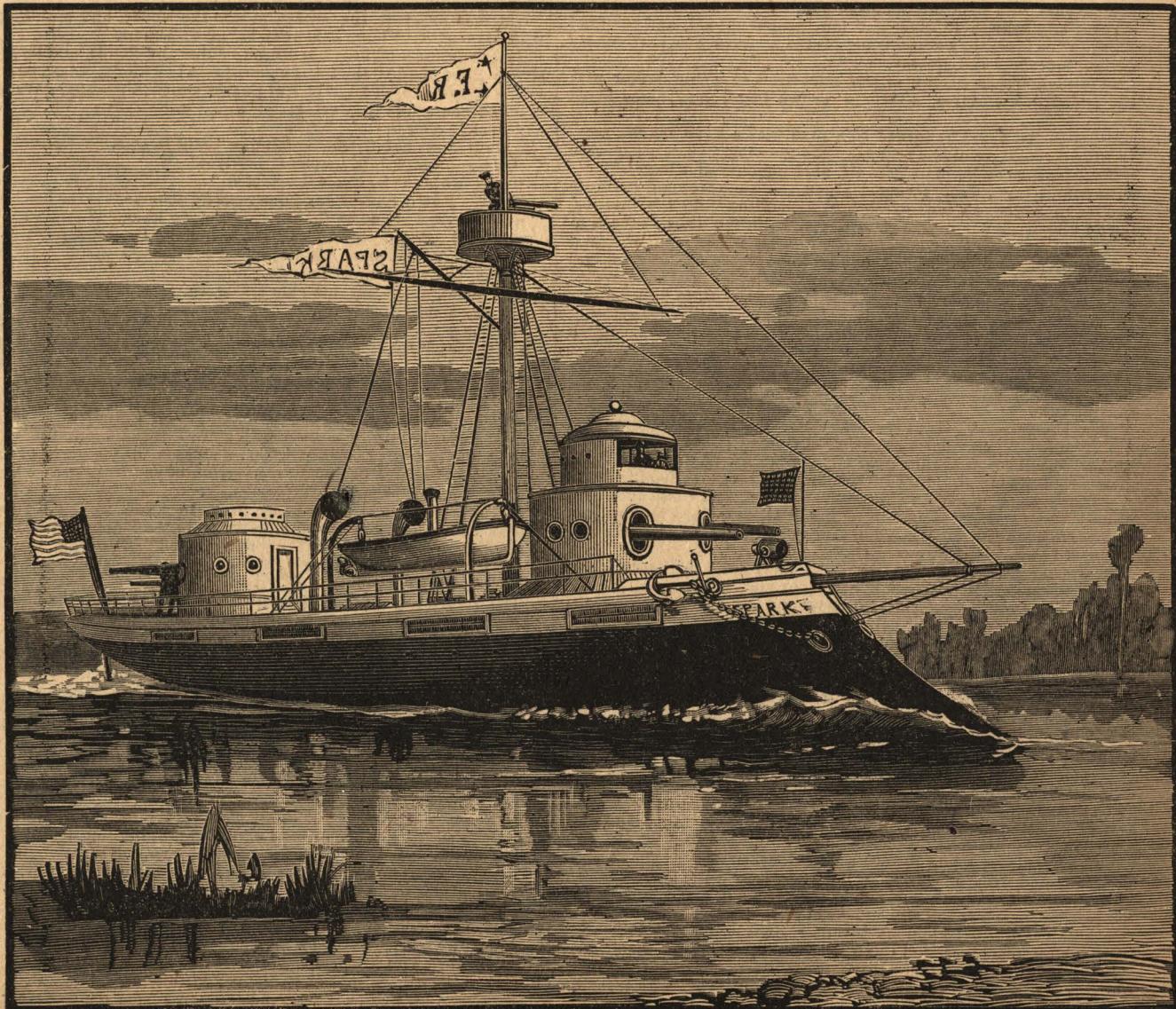
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Frank Reade, Jr.,

AND HIS ELECTRIC CRUISER OF THE LAKES; or,
A Journey Through Africa by Water.

By "NONAME."



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Frank Reade, Jr., and His Electric Cruiser of the Lakes:

OR,

A JOURNEY THROUGH AFRICA BY WATER.

By "NONAME,"

Author of "Frank Reade, Jr., With His Air Ship in Asia," "Frank Reade, Jr., in the Far West," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

A HUMAN TARGET FOR KNIVES.

WHEN the midnight express train paused at the pretty city of Readestown, a fine-looking old gentleman with a white beard alighted, some years ago.

He was a celebrated scientist, named Dr. Vaneyke, and had come from the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, with which he was connected.

The object of his visit to Readestown was to see Frank Reade, Jr., a noted young inventor, upon business relating to his discovery of the location of a rich gold mine in Africa.

Scarcely had the professor left the train, and started to walk toward the inventor's house, when four ruffianly looking men alighted from the same cars, and stealthily followed him.

At that late hour there were but few people abroad, and the road leading to the inventor's house being on the suburbs was particularly deserted, lonesome and gloomy.

One of the gang in pursuit of the scientist was a big fellow with dark sunburned features, a bristly brown beard and fierce black eyes.

As they glided along he turned to a man with a clean shaven face, who wore a rough, semi-nautical suit, like the others, and whispered:

"Are you sure he knows where the gold mine is, Jim Baxter?"

"Of course I am, Tom Driggs. When the Smithsonian Institute sent him to Africa, on an exploring expedition into the interior, wasn't I one of his party? We were way down in the heart of the continent when one night he came into camp with a big lump of gold, showed it to us, and said he had found a mine worth millions of dollars on the shore of Lake Victoria Nyanza."

"So you told me when you signed articles last week to sail on my ship, the Lioness, to Alexandria, in Egypt."

"Well, captain," continued Jim Baxter, "we asked him where the gold mine was, but he refused to tell. He said upon his return home he was going to call on his old friend Frank Reade, Jr., and induce him to make a trip to Africa, to get this gold. I told you all this before, you know."

"Yes, I remember. But I just wanted to be sure we are not on a fool's errand. When you told me this story, and I said I would force Vaneyke to tell me where the gold mine is, before he imparts the secret to Frank Reade, Jr., I meant business. There's no fooling about me. That's why I've had the professor watched, so I could intercept him on his way from Washington to Reade's house. As long as you are positive about his knowledge of this gold, I'm going to make him confess, if I have to kill him to do it."

The sinister tone of the captain of the Lioness left no doubt in the minds of his sailors that he would carry out his deadly threat.

"And if you get the information, sir?" queried Baxter, expectantly.

"We will leave New York on my ship to-morrow, cross the Atlantic, and head for Egypt. We can then go down the Nile, and try to get a cargo of the gold. Now, remember, boys, if you are faithful to me, you shall all have a share of the treasure."

Every one of the men were greedy.

Their hands sought the hilts of their sheath knives, and a look of implacable determination swept over their swarthy faces.

"Trust us!" muttered one hoarsely.

"Ay, ay, sir! We're out for business!" hissed the other.

A satisfied look shone in the gleaming eyes of Tom Driggs.

He then glanced ahead, and saw Prof. Vaneyke, valise in hand, hastening along the road a short distance in advance.

The scientist was going toward a magnificent mansion near a river that connected with the ocean.

Near the house were the enormous workshops of Frank Reade, Jr., after whose ancestors the city had been named.

In these buildings the famous inventor built wonderful submarine boats, flying machines and land engines operated by electricity, steam, magnetism and other great powers.

At this moment Dr. Vaneyke reached a lonely spot, with trees on each side of the road.

Captain Driggs motioned his companions to hasten.

They made a sudden rush and reached the professor.

He heard them coming, and turned around just as they sprang upon him and bore him over upon the ground.

"Heavens!" he gasped, in startled tones.

And the next moment he began to struggle with them.

It was impossible for him to fight off his assailants.

Two of them pinned him down to the ground, and the other two proceeded to tie him hand and foot with pieces of marline.

In a few moments he was rendered powerless.

"Let me go, you scoundrels!" he panted. "Let me go I say! If you want to rob me you need not threaten murder!"

"Shut up!" hissed Driggs, savagely. "Now, boys, tie him to a tree!"

The men dragged the professor into the woods, and standing him with his back to a huge oak, they bound him there.

Just then the moon emerged from behind the clouds, and its mellow silvery light pierced the foliage and slanted down on the scene.

The doctor caught sight of Jim Baxter among the gang, gave a start of amazement, and then cried:

"What! You here!"

"He told me about your gold mine," said Driggs.

"My gold mine. Is that your motive?"

"Yes, we want to know where it is."

"Hal! Now I understand your rascally scheme."

"Speak out! Give us the information we want."

"Never! You design to go there and claim its treasures."

"Ay, that's the plan. Eh, boys?"

"Yes, yes, yes!" cried the rest.

The doctor's face became pale and stern.

He was a very plucky man.

In days gone by he had gone with Frank Reade, Jr., on some of his perilous journeys, and faced death in various forms without flinching.

Now all the dogged determination in his nature was aroused.

"See here," said he to the villainous sailors, "I am not to be coerced. I won't tell you where to find the gold, for I want to get it myself. Jim Baxter, you are a treacherous dog to incite this trouble. I never did like you in Africa when you was with my party of explorers. Now I see how justified my aversion of you was."

"Ah, get out!" snarled Baxter, sourly.

"If you don't tell us what we want to know we'll kill you, sir!" hissed the captain, brandishing his knife in the helpless man's face.

"Oh, I ain't afraid of you!" coolly replied Dr. Vaneyke.

"Do you intend to obey me or not?"

"No! Do your worst! I defy you!"

The infuriated captain made a motion as if to stab the old gentleman, when Baxter seized his arm restraining him.

"Hold on!" he muttered. "Kill him and we learn nothing."

"That's so!" growled Driggs, savagely glaring at the prisoner.

"Can't you force him to speak?"

"Yes, I can. I'll put him in a cold sweat."

"How will you do it?"

"Each of you shall take turns hurling your knives to see how near you can come to him without killing him. I am an expert knife-thrower. At ten paces I could fling mine and split his heart in two. Do you hear me, Mr. Professor?"

Dr. Vaneyke shuddered.

He realized the peril of being made a target for these experienced men with their keen blades, and expected nothing but death.

"You shall not learn my secret!" he said, stubbornly.

"Very well. We shall see if we can't break your will!" hissed Driggs, with a sardonic grin. "Draw your blades, boys!"

They recoiled a few paces from the doctor.

Each man held his sheath knife by the blade point.

A deathly silence ensued a moment, then Driggs exclaimed:

"Hogan? You fire first!"

One of the sailors spoken to stepped in front of the doctor. He toed a scratch in the ground ten paces from the professor.

Raising his keen blade, he aimed, and let it fly. Through the air flew the knife, and each one watched the flashing blade spin toward the doctor with eager, expectant looks. Thud! went the sharp point into the tree. It struck so close to the doctor's throat that it touched the skin! Vaneyke shivered, and his eyes began to expand, but he firmly pressed his lips together and said not a word.

A boisterous yell of delight pealed from the gang. "Well done, Hogan!" roared the captain, slapping the man on the back. "I'll bet that made a cold chill go through him. Now, then, old fellow, will you speak? The next one may stick in your head."

"Oh, you can't make me weaken!" cried the doctor, obstinately.

"You've got nerve," growled Driggs, in disappointed tones. "It's your turn, Morgan. See if you can dig a piece out of him."

"I'll make a pincushion of him!" grinned the other.

He took his position and let his knife fly with all his might. The handle struck the tree and it glanced off and fell to the ground. Dr. Vaneyke's feelings were dreadful when he saw the blade coming.

The rascals vented their disappointment in terrible imprecations, and Baxter did not wait to be told, but faced the professor.

Away whirled his knife, and with a sharp click it pierced the doctor's shoulder and then stuck in the tree.

"Help—help!" shrieked Vaneyke, as a throb of excruciating pain darted through him, and his voice rang out piercingly.

"Hold your tongue!" roared Driggs. "I knew we'd make you squeal. Now will you confess?"

"Not if you carve me to pieces!" exclaimed the doctor passionately.

"Then, by heavens, since you are so obstinate I'll do it!" yelled the fiery captain. "I'll put my knife through you!"

He took up the position his men had occupied, a terrible look upon his ugly face, and drew back his knife.

But before he could let it drive, a young man, attired in blue, rushed from the road, and doubling up his fist, dealt the brute a blow that felled him like a log.

"You won't hurt him if I can help it!" he cried ringingly.

"Frank Reade, Jr.! Hurrah—hurrah!" cried the professor delightedly, as he recognized the newcomer who saved his life.

"Blast him!" yelled Driggs, arising. "Go for him, boys!"

The four rascals closed around the unarmed young inventor with their knives, which they had hastily recovered from the tree and the ground.

CHAPTER II.

THE CRUISER OF THE LAKES.

FRANK was menaced by the direst peril when the four murderous sailors surrounded him, brandishing their knives.

But the dashing fellow had nerves of steel, and did not flinch, although death was staring him squarely in the face.

He was a fine specimen of physical young manhood, with a small, dark mustache, keen eyes, an intellectual forehead, and an athletic figure, made up of bone and sinew.

"Barney!" he shouted. "Hey, Pomp!"

"He's got friends!" muttered Driggs, in dismay.

An instant later this remark was verified.

Flying footsteps approached rapidly from the road.

The next moment a wiry, raw-boned Irishman, with a good-natured, freckled face, dashed up to him.

His name was Barney O'Shea, and he was a great friend of Frank's, and as full of fun and fight as a Celt can be.

He was followed by a jet black coon named Pomp, of very short stature, who possessed a strong penchant for butting people.

"Hoopla!" yelled the Irishman, brandishing a shillaleh. "Get out av me way afore I thramp yez inter powdher!"

"Heah we am, Marse Frank!" roared the darky. "Oh, golly! Wha' dem men gwine ter do wif dey's razzors—h'm!"

"Charge on them! They're killing Dr. Vaneyke!" exclaimed Frank.

Then the three made a rush for the sailors.

It was like a veritable whirlwind.

Bang! went Barney's shillaleh down upon the head of Hogan, and that individual bit the dust as if the sky fell on him.

Bump! went Pomp's hard skull against Morgan's stomach, and with a terrible gasp the sailor doubled up and flew in a bush.

Frank dealt Baxter a punch on the nose that made him see stars innumerable, and landed him against a rock.

Seeing inevitable defeat ahead, Captain Tom Driggs snatched up the professor's valise and wisely took to his heels.

Dr. Vaneyke observed this, and shouted frantically:

"Oh, stop him. He's got my valise, and it contains a journal of my exploring trip, in which is written a correct description of the location of the African gold mine they wanted to know about."

"What's that, doctor?" demanded Frank, picking up a knife one of the sailors had dropped and severing the professor's bonds.

"Don't let that fellow escape."

"We can't overhaul him now. He's got too big a start."

"Then I'll follow him myself!" cried the doctor in agony of mind, for only he knew how necessary it was to capture Driggs ere he saw what the journal in the valise said.

And away he sped after the fugitive.

Frank, Barney and Pomp had their hands full to render the three men powerless whom they attacked.

Both the coon and the Celt were fire eaters. They pitched into the sailors and the three were finally secured. Frank bound them with the pieces of marline he had cut from the professor, and then asked his prisoners:

"What was the cause of this row?"
"I won't tell you!" snarled Baxter.
"Then we'll find out when our friend returns."

"Be heavens!" said Barney, "it was a pincushion they were makin' av Misther Vaneyke wid their frog stichers, did yer moind."
"Dey's gwine ter be a hangin' match heah befo' long," grimly asserted Pomp, shaking his fist at the prisoners. "An' yo' white trash am gwine ter be de ones on de wrong end ob de rope!"

"It's lucky we were going to the railroad depot by this road just now," said Frank, "else we would not have heard the professor's cry for help, and he might have succumbed to these villains."

"Shure an' it's no goin' ter Chicago we'll be after doin' this blessed noight be ther 12:15 train," said Barney, "for there's ther phwistle now an' she's off, so she is."

"Can't help dat now, honey," said Pomp. "How yo' specs we'se gwine ter Chicago fo' de tings Marse Frank want fo' his new electric boat when we'se got dese yere chillen ter kill?"

Frank questioned the prisoners again, but they refused to speak. While he was so engaged Dr. Vaneyke came back panting for breath and looking very much disappointed.

"The wretch has escaped me," he cried in disgust, "and he has got the very secret in my valise which he stole, which I was guarding with my life! The train for Chicago was just departing, and I saw him jump on, and he was carried out of my reach!"

"What a pity!" cried Frank. "But what does all this mean?" The professor explained the matter.

"The gold mine is a wonder of wealth," said he. "You know you wrote me you was building a new electric cruiser. If you had no other use for it, I wanted you to go to Africa with me, and get the gold. But now that villain has got it."

"But my boat isn't completed yet," said Frank.

"Will you go when it is finished?"

"Yes, of course I will. I have no use to put her to."

"Good! Now let us put these men in prison for their attempt to murder me. When I get to your house I'll give you all the details of this treasure. Perhaps we can get ready to follow that man who has my valise to Africa, and stop him robbing my claim of gold. See here, Jim Baxter."

"Well, sir?" demanded the captive, in surly tones.

"Who was the man who robbed me?"

Baxter pondered a moment. He realized that he would now go to jail for his misdeed, and that Driggs would go on to Africa and get the gold.

It made him furious to think that the captain would reap a rich harvest while he must lie suffering in prison.

He therefore did not hesitate to reply:

"He is Captain Tom Driggs of the steamship Lioness, bound from New York to Alexandria, Egypt."

"Thank you for the information," said the doctor, politely. "As we now know who he is, the name of his ship, its location and destination, perhaps we can stop him."

They thereupon got the prisoners upon their feet.

Marching them into the city, our friends put them in the hands of the police, and made a formal charge against them.

The professor then had the chief of police telegraph to the authorities of New York to apprehend Driggs when he boarded his ship.

Going to Frank's house after that, the doctor gave the inventor and his two friends a detailed account of the African gold mine.

As the hour was then late, they retired and the professor dressed his wound.

On the following morning the professor met the rest of the family with whom he was well acquainted, and had a hearty welcome.

"I have not seen any of your inventious in a long time, Frank," said he to the young inventor, after breakfast, "and ever since I heard that you had constructed a new boat I have been wild to see it. You must show me your latest contrivance."

"Why certainly," laughed Frank. "Come out to the shop. I have not completed the vessel get as I told you, but when she is finished, you will find her to be a beauty."

"What induced you to construct her?"

"Two reasons, professor. One was my love for inventing, and another was to produce a vessel shallow enough in draught to cruise the great lakes in the interests of the government, to suppress the smuggling going on there. But as you have got a much better use for her, I think we'll find the boat well adapted to navigating the shallow waters of the Dark Continent's rivers and lakes when we go on our journey through Africa by water."

He led the professor out to the workshops. There Dr. Vaneyke found the Spark, as the electric boat was called. She floated in a circular reservoir of brick work.

The boat was about one hundred and fifty feet long, had a beam of thirty feet, and was of comparatively light draught, as she had a flat bottom.

Her bow was long and sharp, armed with a ram, and the stern was equally as long, overhanging, and was furnished with a rudder and an immense propeller.

On either side were four long, narrow windows, furnished with sliding shutters, while the deck was surmounted by two turrets from which two pneumatic guns projected forward, and two aft.

A powerful searchlight stood in the bow, and a pilot-house was

mounted on top of the forward turret, there were davits at the sides carrying metal quarter boats, and a fighting mast rose amidships.

The rooms below were ventilated by air-funnels.

Dr. Vaneyke critically eyed this dangerous looking craft a few moments, and turning to Frank, he said grimly:

"She's beautiful, but a regular arsenal."

"Of course. Think of the warlike work she was designed to do."

"Well, those weapons won't come amiss in the Dark Continent, for before we reach Lake Victoria Nyanza we must pass through the countries of hostile savages, fierce storms, carnivorous animals and no end of dangers from which the guns may defend us."

He then passed aboard by a gang plank.

Each of the turrets had a door, and he opened the one forward.

It showed him the breeches of the guns standing inside, a staircase leading up to the turret, and a companion leading down-stairs.

He descended into a large room used as a cabin and state-room, in back of which was a combined dining-room and kitchen.

They were magnificently furnished, and contained electric lights and fan wheels.

Aft of this room was a store-room, and the sternmost compartment contained the dynamo, storage batteries, oil engine, insulated wires, powerful motors, air pumps and mechanism that worked the boat.

Having inspected everything and seen that the boat was not completed, the professor returned to the deck and went ashore.

As he did so, he was startled to hear a tremendous yell out in the yard in the voice of Barney.

It was followed by a crashing noise, the patter of running feet, and then the voice of Pomp wildly shouting.

Wondering what it portended, the professor and Frank exchanged startled looks and rushed to the door.

Flinging it open, they sped out.

An amazing scene was presented to their view.

CHAPTER III.

AN AWFUL EXPLOSION.

RUSHING through the young inventor's immense yard were the three sailors whom our friends had caused to be imprisoned.

They were hotly pursued by Barney and Pomp, while rushing into the garden from the street were a number of policemen and citizens.

The prisoners had broken from the officer who was taking them from the station house to the court for examination.

Rushing through the streets with a rapidly swelling crowd at their heels they reached Frank's grounds, ran in, and instead of finding a safe retreat there, they encountered Barney and Pomp who had been sitting in an arbor playing a fiddle and a banjo.

Frank and the professor instantly joined in the hunt.

Away dashed the three desperate men faster than before when they saw the inventor and the old scientist following them too.

"By thunder, the prisoners!" cried Frank. "They've escaped!"

"They can't get out of here, can they?" queried the professor.

"Not unless they return the way they came from," replied Frank, grimly "for the place is surrounded by a high fence."

"That they dare not do, as the front of the yard is thronged with policemen and civilians," muttered Vaneyke.

Running at the top of their speed, the three fugitives soon reached a small brick building standing apart from the rest, and dashing in, they closed the door after them.

Frank uttered a cry of consternation.

"It is my magazine!" he cried. "Halt, everybody! It is almost sure death to enter there if you don't know the place!"

Every one paused suddenly.

Frank's words made them shiver.

"The magazine is stored with dynamite, guncotton, and other explosives enough to blow up the whole city!" cried Frank.

"Faith, it's a microscope we'll nade ter foind their remains if they shtroikes agin any av ther explosives," said Barney.

"All hands clear out of here!" shouted the professor excitedly.

"There may be an explosion that will kill you!"

The officers and crowd fled for their lives.

In a few moments the yard was deserted by all but our friends.

"Fo' de Lawd's sake, what we'se gwine ter do?" gasped Pomp.

"Go into the magazine through the tunnel under the ground that runs from the workshop," replied Frank. "If they see us approach the door it may throw them in a panic. The slightest shock against any of the explosives will blow up the place."

With this understanding they hastened into the shop.

Here a trap-door was opened in the floor, and the three descended a flight of stone stairs into a vaulted passage.

It was dark and damp.

Frank led the way.

But half the distance had been covered when suddenly there sounded a frightful roar that shook the earth.

The explosion was deafening.

The air was filled with flying bricks and debris, an immense hole was torn in the ground, and the magazine vanished.

Our friends were horrified.

"As I feared!" muttered Frank.

"How dey done do it?" gasped the coon.

"No one will ever know," replied the doctor, significantly.

"Begob, it's well fer us we war not in ther yard!" said Barney.

They hastened out of the tunnel, reached the outer air, and saw the scene of the explosion.

Not a window pane was left whole in any of the buildings around

them, and the flying avalanche had broken and torn everything that stood in its way.

Again the crowd surged in from the street.

"Were the prisoners in the building when it blew up, Mr. Reade?" questioned the chief of police.

"All of them," replied Frank.

"It will be impossible to even hold a coroner's inquest over them, I presume, sir?"

"Utterly out of the question, sir."

"Have you any idea how the explosion happened?"

"I can only give you a theory. The magazine was filled with some high explosives. One of the men must have struck the stuff."

Not a particle of the unfortunate wretches was to be found.

The crowd was finally dispersed by the police, and Frank congratulated himself that the damage done to his property was no greater than it was.

He set a number of laborers to work clearing the ruins away and repairing the damage.

Barney and Pomp went to Chicago to get the things wanted by the young inventor to complete building his boat, and the work went on for a week.

At the end of that time the Spark was finished and equipped for the journey Frank intended to take in her.

News reached the old professor of a serious nature.

Tom Driggs had not only escaped the police of New York, but had put out to sea in the steamer Licness.

The vessel had been gone a week.

"With such a start as that," said Frank, "they will very likely reach the place before we can. However, that does not dismay me. I've tried the boat on the river, and found that she operates as she should. She can make thirty miles an hour. We will be close at their heels."

"We must not lose a moment's time," said Dr. Vaneyke. "We have seen evidence that Tom Driggs is a desperate and unscrupulous man, who is very greedy for this gold. He will very likely fight hard to put us out of the way if we meet him."

They left the room, and Barney turned to Pomp and said:

"Faix, it's a hard toime we'll be after havin' av it."

"Specs we will, honey," replied the coon.

He took a big cigar from his pocket and lit it.

Barney eyed him closely, and a mischievous twinkle appeared in his eyes, for the coon was puffing away at the cigar with a very grand and lordly air.

"It's a foine shtinker yez has there," remarked Barney.

"Regular Henry Mud," announced Pomp, putting on more airs than ever. "Doan' you' wish yo' had one?"

"Niver, whoile I have me meerschaum," replied Barney, taking an old clay pipe from his pocket and filling it with rank tobacco.

"Only one ob dese yere come in a box," said Pomp, grinning, for he saw that Barney was envious of his possession of the cigar and was evidently scheming to get it away from him.

"Be heavens, it's looky there bes," said the Celt. "If I wor to kape me nose in the affluvium av that Havauny long its a coarse I'd be. Lind me ther loan av a loight fer me poipe."

Pomp graciously handed over the cigar.

Instead of lighting his pipe with it, Barney stuck the butt in his mouth, handed the pipe to the coon and strode away.

"Hey, dar!" roared the coon in tones of indignation.

"I don't see any," said Barney, pausing and grinning.

"Any what?"

"Hay."

"G'way. Doan' yo' fink yo' fo'got somefin'?"

"Divil a bit! What d'yez mane?"

"My cheroot."

"Is it a cheroot yez calls this thing?"

"Spec's it am. Wha' yo' call it?"

"A donation gift, begorra."

"How am dat?"

"It seldom goes back."

"Fink yo's awfully funny, doan' yo'?"

"Faith, I know I am. Ivery toime I luck at you it makes me gag."

"Gimme dat butt!"

"Niver! It's moine. Shmoke ther poipe."

"Gwine ter gib it to me?"

"No!"

"Den I smash dis ole pipe!"

And Pomp slammed it down on the floor, smashing it into a thousand pieces, but Barney merely smiled.

He had the cigar and it seemed to be a good one.

"It's widout a shmoke yez are entoirely now!" he chuckled, puffing away.

"I want dat dar cigar!" roared Pomp, vehemently.

"Get out! It's no appreciation yez have av anything but—"

Bang! exploded a firecracker concealed inside of the cigar just then and the whole thing blew to pieces.

"Wow!" yelled the delighted coon, who had lured Barney into a trap.

"Murdher!" howled Barney, in horror. "I'm shot!"

And down he tumbled on the floor, while the laughing black practical joker rushed out of the room to escape the consequences.

Up jumped the Irishman and away he dashed after the coon.

When they met out in the yard there was a struggle which might have led to serious consequences had not Frank come out of the shop and separated them.

That afternoon leave was taken of the Reade family, and the four friends embarked on the Spark.

The oil engine had been operating the dynamo and the dynamo had been charging the storage batteries.

Barney then stopped the engine and dynamo, Pomp busied himself lubricating the machinery, the doctor cast off the hawsers, and Frank went up into the wheel house.

It was a commodious room, containing a compass, charts, a lever board for controlling the boat's mechanism, and a large number of dials for registering the elements, forces, tension of current, atmospheric changes and so on.

Pulling the lever marked No. 1 Frank put the storage battery current in connection with the motor, and the propeller revolved.

The Spark glided out to the river.

Going down the stream, she finally reached the sea.

The boat went swifter, more smoothly, and much easier than most sea going craft with her electrical mechanism, the peculiarity of her lines, and the unique manner of her arrangement.

Our friends were launched on their journey.

It was destined to be one of the most exciting and perilous they had ever been on, as will presently be seen.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HOLE IN THE HULL.

A TERRIBLE storm in mid-Atlantic was raging furiously several days later, and the Spark was caught in its giant grip.

The little cruiser was but a mere cockle-shell in that awful element, and rolled, tossed and pitched frightfully.

Waves were rolling up like mountains on each side of her, hissing and boiling with foam, the wind shrieked a dirge carrying the spray in great clouds, the murky sky was split by flying lightning, and the boom and roar of thunder echoed far and near.

It was a wild night.

Rain poured down in a slanting deluge.

Frank had no fears for the safety of the boat, though.

She was built much stancher than most sea-going vessels, and being almost entirely enclosed, there did not seem to be much chance for the water to get into her.

The young inventor stood at the wheel that tempestuous night, and having turned on the glow of the search-light, its brilliant shaft cut through the gloom and shot far ahead.

Barney was in the turret with him, and as the Spark rushed upon the crest of an enormous wave and then dashed down into the trough, it seemed as if she were sinking miles into the earth.

Grasping his stomach with both hands, and drawing a deep, gasping breath, the Irishman groaned:

"Howly Pather! It's troo ther earth we're agoin' entoilery!"

"The cruiser works nobly," replied Frank smilingly. "She's a much better boat than I expected she'd be. This storm is a good test of her seaworthiness. See how quickly she recovers herself and answers her helm. It's astonishing."

"Troth, I do be wishin' I wor safe ashore!" groaned the Celt. "Divil a sailor wor I intended for. It sames as if ther soles av me brogues wor coomin' up troo ther roof av me head."

"Where is Pomp?"

"Down in ther shhtaterume wid his head buried in ther pillies av his boond, groanin' fit ter chook a marn inter shpasms."

"And the doctor?"

"Fiddlin' wid ther electric loightin' machine ter git ther hang av it."

"Well, I hope——"

But just then the lights went out.

Frank and Barney were startled the gloom ensued so rapidly.

"Hello, what's that?" muttered the inventor.

"Some av that pruin' ould perfesser's wuk av coarse."

"Hey, doctor, what's the matter with the lighting machine?" Frank shouted in a telephone communicating with the engine room.

"A sudden lurch of the boat flung me against the feed wire and tore it from the binding post," replied the old scientist.

"Fix it as quickly as you can. I can't see where I'm going."

"Very well I'll have it ready in a few moments."

The densest gloom now enshrouded the boat.

It was only broken by the fitful flashes of lightning that tore across the sky at frequent intervals.

The effect of the gloom was soon felt.

Roaring billows struck the boat abreast, and dashed her through the foam like a mere cork.

The whistling wind flew past the reeling mast with a piercing wail, and the breakers breached over the decks and made the boat stagger beneath the awful blows.

A frown of annoyance crossed Frank's brow.

"I can't do anything with her now, for I can't see from which direction the billows are coming and steer her to receive them easiest!" he exclaimed.

"Hark! What's that?" muttered Barney.

Outside they heard a swastling sound.

The Spark seemed to dart toward it.

A terrible crash followed.

It felt as if the boat had struck a rock.

She shivered from stem to stern and every one was hurled to the floor, while the boat recoiled.

In a moment more they all arose and heard a loud, gurgling noise down below.

At the same moment, the doctor having secured the electric light feed wire again, the incandescent lamps glimmered and the searchlight sent out its effulgent beams.

Frank peered out the pilot-house window.

"We've run down a derelict!" he cried.

"Howly floy—a wreck is it?" gasped Barney.

"The bow has struck the dismantled hulk."

"What's that gurglin' sound, sor?"

By way of reply the coon now yelled up:

"Marse Frank! De bow am stove in!"

"Heavens! We've sprung a leak!" gasped Frank, in dismay.

"Help! Help!" howled Pomp.

"Take the wheel, Barney!" cried Frank.

He dashed down below, and found the cabin flooded with two feet of water, while up in the bow he caught sight of a hole in the starboard bow as big as his head.

The brine was pouring into it furiously.

It was impossible to stop the awful cataract.

That the Spark would founder there was no doubt.

A chill of horror passed over the young inventor, and he began to rapidly think out a means of saving the boat.

Finally a desperate idea occurred to him.

"All hands put on diving suits!" he shouted. "Hey, Barney!"

"Yis, sor."

"Shut off power."

"I will that."

A moment afterwards they all entered the storeroom.

Here were hung a number of metallic diving suits, with electric lamps on the helmets and air cylinders on the backs.

There was enough atmosphere compressed in the reservoirs to last each of them six hours under water, while in a small separate compartment in the cylinders were powerful batteries that kept their helmet lights glowing.

In a few moments they were all attired.

In the meantime Frank gave his friends certain instructions and they hastened up to the deck with ropes.

The floating wreck was filled with lumber Frank observed, and it was then but a few feet away from the sinking Spark.

Four lengths of rope were carried on deck.

Each of the crew took one, and tied an end at four corners of the electric cruiser's deck.

Frank took the four remaining ends in his hands.

He then sprang upon the deck of the wreck, and securely tied them fast to her in four different places.

By the time he finished the Spark went down.

Frank's companions were carried down with her, and in a moment were swallowed up by the ocean.

The weight of the cruiser bore on one side of the wreck, and suddenly capsized her so that she floated keel upward.

Frank barely had time to seize a rope when she turned over and thus prevented himself falling into the ocean and sinking to the bottom.

In a moment more the Spark hung by the ropes Frank had secured her to the drifting wreck with.

She pulled the overturned derelict under some, but it did not require much buoyancy to float her from bottom.

Frank slid down the rope to the deck of the Spark.

Here he found his companions.

The cruiser was filled with the brine.

Every roll and toss of the wreck that held her from sinking made her move up and down, and sway to and fro.

The electric lights were all glowing as they are the only lights that burn under water without air.

Motioning to his friends to follow, the young inventor passed into the boat, and when the door was closed they went down to the cabin.

Here Frank examined the hole in the hull.

It was a jagged aperture, and showed him that when the Spark collided with the wreck she must have struck a metal projection.

To patch it up inside was impossible.

But the young inventor did not mind the inconvenience.

He went to the storeroom with his friends and procured a metal plate, a drill, some rivets, hammers, ropes and other things.

Boring holes near the edge of the plate, and then drilling holes in the hull around the break that corresponded with the ones in the plate, he motioned Pomp and the doctor to stay there.

With Barney he went on deck.

Tying a rope around himself, Frank motioned the Celt to lower him down to the hole, and when this was done he took the plate rivets and a hammer which Barney let down to him.

In a few moments they were riveting the plate over the opening.

When this was finished and Frank was hoisted up, he went inside, and getting some metallic cement, he stopped up the crevices between the patch and the hull.

Next he secured a double hose to the water pump, and then gearing the pump motor to the storage batteries, he carried one end of the long hose out on deck through a bull's-eye in the turret.

Here he tied a line to himself again and put the other end in Barney's hand, after which he took off his weights.

Holding the end of the hose and ascending surfaceward by the buoyancy of his air knapsack, he reached the top and got upon the hulk, where he fastened the hose.

Stuffing had been put in the bull's-eye around the hose, where it came out of the turret, to exclude the ingress of water.

The pump ran by the batteries.

Water spurted from the end Frank carried to the top, and as no more could get into the boat, it was rapidly emptied.

As fast as the water poured out of her, she arose with the decrease of the weight that had been holding her down.

In half an hour she floated on the surface of the raging sea again, entirely emptied of the water she had contained.

The patch did not admit a drop of brine, and our friends were overjoyed at the success of Frank's ingenious plan.

CHAPTER V.

UP THE NILE.

"CAST off those mooring hawsers!" cried the young inventor, when they had abandoned their diving suits. "Unrig that pump! I'm going to blow up that wreck so it will no longer menace other ships, and perhaps wreck them!"

His companions hastily complied.

As soon as everything was clear, Frank left the wheel in the coon's hands, and descended into the gun turret.

He opened the breeches of both pneumatic guns, shoved in long brass cartridges of dynamite, and filled the reservoirs.

Getting aim at the wreck, he pulled a lever, releasing the compressed atmosphere, and the projectile flew out.

It exploded with a terrific report when it struck the wreck, and tore all the deck off, littering the sea with lumber.

The second shot was then fired.

It completed the destruction of the wreck.

She was completely torn to fragments.

Frank was then satisfied.

He went down below, and seeing that the patch was all right, he next examined the drenched interior of the Spark.

The water had of course destroyed many things, but the damage was so slight that it did not trouble Frank much.

Indeed, he congratulated himself that they had a very narrow escape from total loss of the boat.

The Spark ran ahead through the storm, and finally crossing the Atlantic, she passed into the Mediterranean sea.

Her course was laid for the Nile.

Everywhere she went the crews on passing ships were struck by her peculiar and warlike appearance.

They in most cases set her down for a gunboat of some foreign nation.

In some instances they were hailed.

But as Frank had no desire to gratify their idle curiosity with an account of his craft, he paid no attention to any one, but kept quietly on his way to Alexandria.

Frank stopped the boat off this city to make inquiries about the Lioness.

One of the quarter boats was lowered, Barney and Pomp got in with Frank and rowed ashore.

The city stood partly on the Island of Pharos, now a peninsula, but most of the buildings were on the isthmus running to the mainland.

It was once surrounded by a strong turreted wall, but in various places it was destroyed to make way for improvements.

In the Turkish quarter the streets were narrow, irregular and filthy, and the houses small, mean and ill built.

On the other hand, the Frank quarter presented the appearance of a European town with handsome streets, shops and squares.

Leaving his friends in the boat, Frank made his way to the Great Square and called upon the American Consul.

"Do you know whether the ship Lioness entered this port recently?" he asked the United States minister?

"No, but she entered the Nile, sir," was the reply, "and she seemed to be in a very great hurry from all accounts."

"When was this?" asked the inventor.

"Seven days ago."

"She must have made good time across from New York."

"Oh, she's a very fast boat. The captain owns her. And she is so flatbottomed that she can ascend the mighty river hundreds of miles."

Frank then explained his mission.

A grave look crossed the consul's face.

He said, however, that he could not assist Frank any, as the Lioness was then entirely out of his reach, but would go to the pasha's palace and apprise him of Driggs' villainy.

When the Lioness came back she might be thus stopped.

Frank then took his leave of the consul.

In returning to his boat he was obliged to go through the Turkish quarter referred to.

As he was hastening along at a rapid pace not far from the water front, he suddenly turned a corner.

A portly Turkish dignitary was hastening from the opposite direction.

Frank and the dark featured Oriental collided furiously.

Down went the Turk into the filth, soiling his gorgeous baggy pants, ripping up his embroidered coat, sending his turban flying, and uttering a string of expletives against the inventor strong enough to sulfurize the air.

"Dog of a Frankish mummy!" he raved, as he bounded to his feet, and drew his scimeter. "I shall cleave thee in twain! By the beard of the Prophet, thy accursed life shall pay for thy beastly stupidity!"

And he rushed at Frank, fully determined to carve him up.

The young inventor darted between the Turk's legs ere he could strike a blow, rose up and pitched him on his face.

The rage of the old fellow was tremendous.

He yelled for help, and tried to swear at the same time.

A crowd of his countrymen came flying from all directions toward them to ascertain the cause of their dignitary's wild plight.

Frank saw that a storm was gathering.

He was unarmed, and therefore unprepared to fight a crowd nearly all whom carried daggers or scimitars in their scarlet sashes.

A medley of voices addressed the fat Turk.

Boiling with rage, he pointed at Frank and howled:

"Seize upon that pagan son of a proscribed race, bare his feet, and deal him twenty blows with a cow's tail. By Mahomet, he has contaminated your cadi with mud. Allah, il Allah, I shall—"

But Frank waited to hear no more.

The crowd had made a rush for him.

He took to his heels, as discretion was the better part of valor in this case, and ran for the water front.

The whole crowd of Turks came rushing along in pursuit of him, brandishing the daggers they carried, and yelling at such a fearful rate that others joined the crowd.

Several men tried to head Frank off.

But his fist shot out and thumped them like a spike driver, or he sent them flying to earth by hitting them with his shoulder, and kept on in the lead.

Turning another corner, he reached the water.

Springing into the boat, he cried to his friends:

"Give away, boys—quick!"

Both Barney and Pomp had seen what was transpiring.

They grasped the oars and pulled away swiftly toward the Spark, and the crowd paused at the water side, yelling and hooting at them, and making all sorts of threats.

But Frank was safe from their clutches.

"Fo' hebbin sake, chile, wha' yo' done?" asked Pomp.

"Merely knocked one of them down by accident," replied Frank.

"Faix, it's roiled they be's entoile!" exclaimed Barney. "D'yez moind, they're gittin' boats ready ter folly us."

"Well, it won't do them any good, as they can't catch the Spark."

"Wha' yo' heah about de Lioness, Marse Frank?"

"She didn't stop here, but went up the Nile seven days ago."

"Bad cess ter that Dhriggs; he'll bate us ter ther lake."

"I don't know about that," said Frank. "You must remember that the Nile is 3,370 miles long, from Lake Victoria Nyanza to the Mediterranean Sea. Besides that there are the dangers from the hostile natives of navigating the big river, to say nothing of the falls which the best ship in the world can't mount, no matter how high the inundations may swell the water."

"Falls, sah! What falls?"

"Between Berber and Wady Halfa rapids and cataracts are to be found which can only be crossed in a flood. Then when the Nile flows from the Victoria into the Albert Nyanza there are the big Murchison falls one hundred and twenty feet high."

"Arrah! How are we ter cloimb up them with this boat?" asked the Irishman, in tones of dismay.

"Dr. Vaneyke has found tributaries of the big river and small creeks that wind around these falls, by means of which we may pass them," replied Frank. "Of course the captain of the Lioness can take advantage of them if he knows where to find them, but I don't believe he does."

At this juncture they reached the electric cruiser and securing the davit lines to the boat hoisted it up.

By this time a number of the native boats had been manned by the fierce crowd who had been chasing Frank, and now came sailing in a stiff breeze toward the Spark.

"It would be an easy matter for me to blow them all to pieces if I felt so inclined," said the young inventor, gazing scornfully at the flotilla approaching. "But that would only lead to trouble with the natives, and this I wish to avoid."

He therefore mounted to the turret and put on the current.

Away rushed the electric boat, followed by the furious shouts of the natives, and they soon left their prisoners far behind, and plunged into the delta of the Nile.

The boat sped along rapidly toward Damantoor, and when the sable mantle of night fell upon the scene nothing more was seen of the Turks or their boats.

The Spark passed Cairo, and was soon going through the magnificent valley of Egypt.

There were numerous mud flats and small islands dotting the water and Frank stood down on the forward deck closely scanning them when the doctor drove the boat too near the right hand side.

She struck a sunken flat with a shock that hurled Frank overboard, but immediately slid over it and shot ahead, leaving him far behind, as no one had seen him fall into the river.

Down he sunk, but he was an expert swimmer, and at once came to the surface again and began to swim.

He saw the boat racing away from him, and shouted:

"Hey, doctor! Come back! Come back and pick me up!"

These words had scarcely left Frank's lips when suddenly the water parted all around him and up came several crocodiles.

The huge saurians had seen the young man, and were wonderfully rapid swimmers.

As soon as they had him located, they dashed at him from all directions with the evident intention of devouring him alive!

A shudder of intense horror passed over the young inventor.

CHAPTER VI.

FIGHTING THE REPTILES.

DR. VANEYKE had heard Frank's cry for help, and, glancing back, saw the inventor swimming in the river.

He at once turned the cruiser around, but to his horror the big crocodiles appeared, and he saw that it would be an utter impossibility to reach Frank in time to save him from the reptiles.

Despite the awful peril he was in Frank did not lose his courage. He realized that his meagre chances for life depended upon retaining his coolness and employing his wits properly.

None knew better than he what rapid swimmers the saurians were; and although it added to his dismay, it served to quicken his actions proportionately.

As soon as the rush of the reptiles was made he dove under the water as far down as he could go, and then swiftly struck out toward a large mud flat he had seen near by.

His body kept ascending as he swam.

He reached the surface before he had gone far.

Some of the crocodiles had disappeared under the water in search of him, but the rest laid on top like logs.

No sooner had he made his appearance in the sunlight, though, when they caught sight of him again.

In a moment they were after him.

But Frank had come up near the mud flat.

He drove ahead through the water until he reached it, and then began to wade ashore.

The thick mud held on to his feet tenaciously.

Floundering through the shoals, he reached the flat.

Here the mud was softer and more tenacious, and he had to fight his way to the middle.

But there he sank up to his knees and stuck fast.

He could not budge an inch.

A cold perspiration broke out all over him as he saw the reptiles swim up to the shore all around the flat.

Then they began to creep slowly toward him.

Their elongated bodies did not sink in the mire as Frank did.

On they came, some of them gaping their huge mouths, bristling with frightful looking teeth.

Frank glanced back over his shoulder.

The cruiser had run ahead until her bow struck the mud, and Barney and Pomp came out on deck armed with pneumatic repeating rifles, charged with explosive bullets of iron.

"Doan' worry, Marse Frank!" yelled the coon. "We'se gwine ter kill dem yere beasts. Watch dem now, sah."

And each of them singled out a victim and fired.

The weapons gave out no report.

A simple thud of escaping air was all.

But the iron bullets fairly howled so fast did they fly.

Upon striking the hard cuirasses of the crocodiles they burst with the most terrific detonations, blowing huge holes in the bodies of the saurians.

Two of them were killed at the first discharge.

Four remained, still approaching Frank.

Barney and Pomp could only aim at two, however, for the others were behind the inventor, and they feared to hit him if they fired at them.

Bang! bang! went two more bullets.

The Irishman and negro were dead shots.

Each of the bullets killed the objects aimed at.

"Lie down!" yelled Barney.

Frank realized that they wished to fire over his prostrate body.

Although the crocodiles were but a few feet distant, and still approaching, the young inventor flung himself on his back almost into the jaws of the monsters.

It was a desperate thing to do, but there was no alternative for his life was at stake. A feeling of intense suspense seized him.

Bang! bang! came the two next shots.

The Celt and the coon had aimed as far from Frank as they could, so the flying particles of iron would not hit him, and he could hear the bullets whistle over him.

A terrific splashing of the mud followed.

He ventured to look up, and saw that while one of the huge beasts had been killed outright, the other was merely wounded.

Its attention was drawn from Frank by the injury, and the splashing came of its tail beating the mud.

Having no joint in its neck, the huge creature was turning its body around to get back into the water, and this action brought its lashing tail nearer to the young inventor.

It flew through the air close to where he lay, every violent slash threatening to kill Frank.

Boom! roared another shot.

It had struck the animal on the back.

That settled it.

The reptile died.

"Hurroo!" roared Barney. "It's kilt."

Frank sat up and glanced around.

He saw the dark bodies of more of the crocodiles in the water, and now caught sight of Pomp and the doctor lowering a boat.

The next moment the coon was in the skiff pulling toward the mud flat, and in a moment he reached it.

"Marse Frank, grab dis yere oar an' I pull yo' out."

"By heavens! I thought my doom was sealed, Pomp."

"Hang on now, honey."

"Pull away."

Frank had seized the oar with both hands.

Pomp was very strong, and succeeded in dragging his legs out of the mud until Frank lay on top of the flat.

He then pulled the young inventor over to the boat.

Once Frank was in it, he presented a sorry spectacle, but his life was saved, and that was all he cared about.

"Give away, Pomp. I'm all right now," said he.

"Gosh amighty! wha' bait yo' was fo' dem den, honey."

"It's lucky you and Barney are such good shots."

"How yo' tumble inter de ribber?"

Frank explained.

On the way back to the boat he sprang overboard and washed himself, after which he re-entered the skiff.

Upon reaching the Spark, they were hoisted up to the deck by Barney and Dr. Vaneyke, to whom Frank's mishap was explained.

While Frank was changing his clothes, the professor went up into the turret, and reversing the screw, he succeeded in getting the Spark out into deep water again.

The journey was then resumed, and various villages were passed.

On the following day Frank and the professor sat under an awning on deck to keep out of the scorching sun, when the young inventor asked of the doctor:

"Do you think we can get through to Khartoum?"

"Well," replied Dr. Vaneyke, reflectively, "vessels generally pass up from Egypt as far as Bedden, a distance of 2,900 miles. But even at this period of high tides, namely between June and August, the ascent of the cataracts between Wady Halfa and Berber is so dangerous for vessels of any size, that the river route is seldom followed. I think we can do it, though."

"They go from the Wady to El Ordeh by land, and thence resume the river up to Old Dongola, proceeding to Khartoum. There's a free course from Dufile to the neighborhood of Murchison Falls, and thence they go overland from Magungo to Lake Victoria Nyanza."

"And we can get around the falls?"

"Easily by means of the circuitous streams I mentioned. We are approaching one now. Don't you see the rapids ahead there?"

"Yes, and there don't seem to be a clear passage through them."

"Come up in the turret and I'll show you how to proceed."

Barney was guiding the boat.

He had a troubled look on his face.

"Bedad, it's blocked we are, I'm afeered," said he.

"Oh, no," laughed the professor. "See that stream to the right?"

"I do that."

"Follow it."

Barney spun the wheel around.

The boat thereupon ran into the stream.

It led them around the First Cataract, as the place was named. Each side of this branch stream was lined by a dense jungle of papyrus, bushes and trees.

Half a mile up the watercourse Frank caught sight of what looked like an ancient ruined city on the right hand bank, half buried in the dense, rank shrubbery.

There were scores of fallen pillars, great, discolored obelisks covered with hieroglyphics, standing columns, and dense weeds, shrubs, and saplings growing among them.

A broken staircase of stone led to the water's edge, at the top of which stood the ruin of an ancient temple, covered with moss and creeping vines.

It was embowered among a number of tall date palms.

As the electric boat drew near it, Frank was startled to hear a wild cry in human tones proceeding from the ruin.

"Help—help—help!" shrieked a man's voice in English.

The voice came from within the old ruin.

Frank stopped the Spark.

"Some one in distress!" he gasped.

"Heavens, what an agonized voice!" cried Dr. Vaneyke.

"Let us go ashore and see who it is."

"All right. Arm yourself, Frank."

"Barney, run the boat up to those stairs."

"Yis, sor," replied the Celt, obeying.

By the time the Spark reached the steps Frank and the old scientist had armed themselves with rifles and went out on deck.

Springing ashore, they ran up the staircase.

"Save me!" frantically screamed the same voice again.

Into the ruin dashed the two anxious rescuers, and they saw a man standing in the middle of what was once a big room.

He was alone—a white man in sailor costume.

A laugh pealed from his lips when he saw Frank and the professor, and he gave a peculiar whistle, when out from behind the walls rushed a number of armed negroes.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BROKEN STEERING GEAR.

"TREACHERY!" cried Frank. "We have been lured into a trap!"

"You are right!" muttered the professor. "Look out! the negroes are going to attack us. Fire at them!"

A blood-curdling yell had pealed from the lips of the black men, and with their spears raised they rushed at the two friends.

Crack—crack!

Crack—crack! went four shots.

For each report a negro bit the dust.

That brought the rest to a pause, and as a sudden panic seized them over this deadly, unexpected fire, they recoiled.

Frank saw the white man turn to run with them, when he covered the wretch with his rifle and shouted:

"Halt where you are, sir!"

"Don't shoot!" yelled the man in alarm.

"Hands up, and come here—quick!"

A groan escaped the fellow, the sarcastic smile left his face, and with an expression of intense alarm he obeyed the inventor.

With reluctant steps and raised hands, he approached slowly.

He had weapons in his belt, but dared not touch them.

"Caught!" he muttered in dismay.

"Hurry!" roared Frank.

A motion with his rifle made the man run.

In a moment he reached them.

They disarmed him, and Frank said sternly:

"March ahead of us! At the first sign of treachery, I'll blow your brains out! Now go you scoundrel!"

Just as they were about to pass through the door, the doctor glanced back, and suddenly cried:

"Dodge!"

Behind the broken wall they sprang.

The prisoner attempted to follow them.

A shower of spears had been hurled by the blacks.

Before the prisoner could get out of the way one of the shafts pierced his back, went through his body, and as a wild scream of agony escaped him, he fell and was pinned to the ground.

Frank and the doctor escaped the missiles by getting behind the stone walls, but saw what befell the traitor.

"He has fallen into his own trap!" the inventor muttered.

"Give them a volley!" cried Dr. Vaneyke.

Several shots were fired at the negroes.

Alarmed by the reports Barney and Pomp had hastily armed themselves and hastened ashore.

Running up the steps they joined Frank and the doctor.

At one glance they took in the situation.

"Come fer 'ther spalpeens!" cried the Irishman. "Whoop! D'yez moind ther timper I have? I'll ait them! Come on!"

"Ay! Charge on them!" cried the doctor.

The four thereupon ran past the groaning man, who lay weltering in his blood on the floor.

Shot after shot was fired at the black men, and while several of them fell the rest ran away and did not return.

Having put their enemies to flight, our friends returned to the wounded man, and drew the spear out of his body.

It caused him the most horrible misery.

Frank noticed that his body was getting discolored and was rapidly swelling up.

"I'm booked for the grave!" groaned the unlucky wretch.

"Yes—you are doomed!" said Frank, grimly.

"Can't you do anything for me?"

"No; that spear was poisoned. The virus has been communicated to your body. You are swelling. In a short time you will die!"

"Oh, why did I do this for Tom Driggs!" groaned the man, dismally. "I don't want to die! Oh, I don't want to die! For God's sake try to save my life. I'll do anything for you if you will."

"It is out of the question to dream of living with such a frightful wound and all the poison you have got," said the professor. "I am a man of medicine, and therefore am in a position to know how badly injured you are."

The man began to groan, scream and weep in a veritable frenzy over the thought that he would have to perish.

Frank looked amazed at his remark.

"So he is one of Tom Driggs' men," he remarked.

"Den dat skunk's ship mus' hab passed you," Pomp added.

"It looked like a put-up job to waylay us," the doctor exclaimed.

"Ax this mon," said Barney. "Faith, he may explain it."

Frank nodded assent, and approaching the dying wretch, he said:

"Did the Lioness pass up this stream?"

"Four days ago," groaned the man. "Driggs feared you would chase him from Readestown, and left me here with some natives he bribed to stop all vessels following from the Lioness."

"How did you know who I was?"

"I didn't until I just heard your names."

"How does your captain know how to get around the falls?"

"Because he picked up a native pilot who is well acquainted with this river from beginning to end."

"I see. He had the book directing him to the gold mine then?"

"Yes. He found it in a valise which he stole from a man in Readestown. He won the help of the steamer's crew by promising all hands an equal share of the gold he might secure."

A terrible paroxysm of pain interrupted the man.

He rolled on the floor, and shriek after shriek escaped him.

Presently the agony became so great that he fainted.

In this manner he died.

They left his body where it laid.

Returning aboard of the cruiser, they sent her along, and running into the Nile again, continued their journey.

Barney got out his old fiddle and Pomp his banjo, as they had brought these instruments with them, and to forget the harrowing scene they passed through, struck up a lively tune.

Our friends were now cast into a fever of apprehension, for if the captain of the Lionees took possession of the mine, he could hold it

against an army with very few men, and might work the supply with native help until it was exhausted.

Every volt of electromotive force the boat could carry was put into the motors, and the Spark flew ahead at a rapid rate.

Several days passed by uneventfully.

They found the different arms of the Nile by which they could get around the cataracts, rapids and falls, and finally reached lake Albert Nyanza without further mishap.

It was one of the great sources of the Nile to discover which Sir Samuel Baker and his heroic wife nearly perished.

The Spark dashed into the mighty lake, and headed toward the eastern shore in search of the Somerset river, which joined it to lake Victoria Nyanza.

The Albert lake was a vast depression, far below the general level of the country, surrounded by precipitous cliffs, and bounded on the west and southwest by great ranges of mountains.

It was ninety-seven miles long by twenty-two wide.

Along the shores were flats of sand and bush under the stupendous cliffs of granite, gneiss and red porphyry, rising fifteen hundred feet, covered with beautiful evergreens of every tint, and giant euphorbias in rank profusion.

Vast banks of reeds, growing upon floating vegetation, lined the shores with a singular barrier.

These banks were formed of decayed vegetation, from which the papyrus rushes took root, and the thickness of the floating mass was three feet.

It was so tough and firm that a man could walk upon it, merely sinking above his ankles in the soft ooze.

Beneath these rafts of vegetation was extremely deep water.

The country about here was populated by hostile Madi and Koshi tribes of negroes, noted for their treachery.

"There's the mouth of the Somerset River now," said the doctor, pointing at a wide stream. "We must follow that course."

"Do you see that storm coming up yonder?" asked Frank, as he pointed to the eastern sky.

"The quicker we get into the river then the better."

Frank nodded and made the effort.

They had scarcely reached the base of the cliffs at one side, however, when there came a terrific gust of wind from the channel that drove the water furiously and set them back.

In a few moments the storm swept down upon them and kicked up as heavy a sea as if the lake were the open ocean.

There were a number of rocks astern of the cruiser.

The water was hissing and boiling over them in white foam, and as the Spark was sent back her rudder struck them.

A grinding crash followed.

The rudder pintle had been broken.

A cry of alarm escaped Frank, for the wheel swung aimlessly in his hands and all control of the boat was lost.

The wind kept backing her, and she bumped against the rocks with a threatening sound that made her inmates shiver.

"The rudder is broken!" Frank cried, in startled tones.

"Lord amassy!" Pomp shouted in alarm. "De wind am drabin' us cl'ar out inter de lake."

"Stop the screw, Reade!" cried the doctor.

"I did," answered the young inventor. "It don't do any good. By thunder, how it blows! We are drifting fast."

"Be ther hokey, it's fixed ther ruddher ougther be!" roared Barney.

"Perhaps I can repair it. I'll see," said Frank.

He hastened down to the deck and went outside.

The wind was blowing so furiously as to nearly sweep him overboard, the waves dashed up on the reeling boat, and a dense gloom began to settle upon the lake.

Such sudden storms were common to that equatorial region, and rage with great violence.

Frank clung to the hand rails secured along the side, and made his way aft with great difficulty.

He soon reached the stern, and as the waves tossed it up out of the water, he saw what had happened to the rudder.

CHAPTER VIII.

A TERRIBLE COMBAT.

To repair the broken pintle of the rudder in that fierce storm was out of the question, and Frank realized it at a glance.

He therefore fought his way to the sternmost turret, opened the door, and going down a flight of stairs into the engine room, he looked around to see if there was anything in the boat by means of which he could rig up a temporary rudder.

A short search discouraged him in this hope.

There was absolutely nothing that could be used as he designed. He would have to let the cruiser drift at the mercy of the storm. Returning to the pilot-house, he apprised his friends of the news. It dismayed them, but they could do nothing.

"Should I put on a diving suit and go over the stern, I would seal my death warrant," said Frank. "The waves are so rough they would keep banging me against the stern of the boat and beat the life out of me."

Faith, it's dhrædful ter kape quiet an' lave ther Shpark dhrift wid-out doin' a thing ter shtop her," regretfully cried Barney, as he glared out the window. "Be heavens, we may be dhriv ter ther tail ind av Afriki afore ther wind goes down, bad cess to it!"

"Our worst peril will be to strike a rock and wreck the boat."

commented the doctor, gravely. "We've got clear of the snags that broke the rudder now, and seem to be in deep water."

"Wha' yo' all finkin' about?" demanded Pomp, impatiently. "Why doan yer frow ober one ob de anchors?"

Every one brightened up at this sensible suggestion, for they had not thought of doing as the coon said.

Frank and Barney rushed down to the deck.

By this time the boat had drifted many miles south of the river they were heading for, and seemed to be within a league of the floating debris on the eastern shore.

The anchor was let go and sank.

It went down twenty fathoms before it reached bottom.

Then it caught, and the cruiser came to a pause, and swung around with her bow to the wind.

There she hung and remained.

Night settled down upon the lake.

A watch was posted, and our friends took turns sleeping.

Toward daybreak the storm cleared away, and Barney, who was on watch at the time, saw the sun rise in the east.

He glanced out the window at the lake and observed that as the wind went down the waves subsided.

Astern of the boat he caught sight of a large flotilla of canoes made of dug out tree trunks coming from shore.

They were filled with half naked savages armed with shields, spears, clubs, bows and arrows.

These people were a mixture of Madis and Koshis, a fierce, warlike race under the government of a noted king named Kamrasi.

Paddling the canoes with amazing speed they had come out of an opening in the floating vegetation lining the shore which had hitherto concealed them from view.

Barney counted over one hundred canoes.

The weapons carried by the natives quickly showed him their hostile intentions, and he muttered:

"An attack, be jabers!"

Then he dove down-stairs.

His first care was to lock the doors.

Then he pulled the screens over the windows.

Having secured the boat against invasion, he yelled:

"Turn out! Turn out!"

Startled from their slumbers, his friends obeyed.

"What's the matter?" quickly asked Frank.

"There's a gang av onmannerly nagurs acomin', sor."

"Ha! dress, boys, and get up in the turrets."

As these words left Frank's lips, a shower of missiles from the savages rattled against the boat.

It was followed by a tremendous yell.

Peering out the loopholes in the windows our friends saw the black warriors and realized the seriousness of the situation.

"They mean business!" cried Frank. "There are several hundred of the beggars, and they are surrounding the Spark."

"Heah dey come up on de deck!" gasped Pomp, as he listened to the patter of footsteps overhead.

"Doctor, you and Barney man the guns in the forward turret, while Pomp and I go up in the after gun room."

The professor assented, and hurried up-stairs with the Celt, while Frank and the coon went to the engine room, and thence up into the after turret.

Scores of the black men had got up on the deck, and were roaming all over the boat, trying to get into her.

An army of them were in the canoes outside.

Frank lost no time loading the guns.

"We may fare seriously unless we drive them away!" he remarked to Pomp. "They would almost sacrifice their lives to gain possession of the metal this boat is made of."

"Golly," gasped the coon, "heah dem yell!"

"What are the fellows doing on the deck?"

"Dey hoisted up one ob de canoes," replied Pomp, as he peered out through one of the bull's-eyes, "an' dey am usin' it fo' a batterin' ram agin de do' ob de furred turret."

"Hope they won't break it down," muttered Frank.

Most of the canoes were astern of the Spark.

He therefore took aim at them and fired the gun.

The shell struck one of the canoes and exploded, blowing the Madis it contained to pieces.

An awful uproar ensued.

The other boats were paddled away.

As they were going Frank fired again.

True to its mark swept the projectile.

An appalling roar followed, the canoe the shell struck was smashed to fragments, and its crew were hurled in the air.

A tremendous shout arose from the natives who remained, and some of them paddled furiously for the shore despite the yeils of the more valiant ones to hold them back.

The men who were on deck did not seem to be intimidated by the roar of the shots, for a score of them were holding a canoe and rushing at the turret door, using it as a battering ram.

Crash after crash resounded as it struck.

Every blow made the boat quiver.

"Fire again, honey! We'se got dem niggahs in the watah!" cried Pomp.

"But the fellows on deck are out of the reach of our friends' weapons," said Frank, as he let another shot fly.

For several minutes he was thus kept busy shooting at the canoes, and a number of them with their crews were destroyed.

Under the repeated blows of the battering ram the door of the forward turret finally gave way with a crash, and with a howl of delight, the negroes rushed into the room.

Dr. Vaneyke and Barney barely had time to rush down-stairs when the savages entered.

Rushing back to the store-room, they provided themselves with repeating rifles, hastily loaded them, and peering through the open doorway saw the blacks ransacking the cabin.

"Give it to them, Barney!" cried the old scientist.

"Begorra, they're robbin' us!" the Irishman muttered.

Then they both fired.

Bullets flew into the cabin like rain.

Many of the blacks were hit and fell.

Others shot arrows back at the two defenders.

A pandemonium of shots now ensued, mingled with the shouts of our friends and the blood-curdling yells of the natives.

Unable to stand the deadly fire the invaders retreated to the deck.

In the meantime Frank had provided himself with a dozen hand grenades in a bag, and opening the door went on deck.

Running up the shrouds, followed by a fusillade of arrows, he managed to escape the missiles and reached the crow's nest.

Here the young inventor was safe behind the bulwarks of the circular platform, and began to hurl the bombs down at the boats.

Every time a grenade struck a canoe a deafening explosion followed, the boat was blown to pieces and the crew injured more or less.

When the invaders came rushing from the cabin, Frank dropped one of the bombs down upon the deck in their midst.

The deck was damaged by the bursting of the shell, but the flying particles of iron mowed down many of the blacks and caused the survivors to dive overboard.

Horrified at the terrible ending of what King Kamrasi thought was going to be an overwhelming victory for himself, the savages got into their canoes and paddled away.

Nor did they pause until they were safely ashore.

Frank then descended from the crow's-nest, and his friends came on deck and tossed the dead negroes overboard.

"The fight is ours!" remarked Frank, triumphantly.

"But at what an awful sacrifice of human life," said the doctor.

"That's the fortune of war, sir. They invited their own doom."

"Sure enough, Frank."

"Me only regret," said Barney, "is that all av them wuzn't kilt!"

"S'posen we fix de ruddah befo' dey come back," said Pomp.

This plan was carried out with alacrity, and as soon as a new pine-tie hook was secured and the rudder hung, our friends hoisted the anchor, and repaired the deck and broken door.

The cruiser then glided ahead through the lake and our friends occasionally caught glimpses of the negroes running along the shore to keep pace with them.

It caused a look of anxiety to mantle Frank's face.

"Is the Somerset river narrow, doctor?" he asked Vaneyke.

"Not more than 150 yards wide in places, Frank."

"Then you can depend that we haven't seen the last of those savages, for they are following the boat."

"In the narrow stream we would certainly be at their mercy," replied the doctor. "But I trust that the cruiser's gun may finally knock all the revengeful feeling out of those black demons. We will soon see, though!"

CHAPTER IX.

LAKE VICTORIA NYANZA.

It was late in the afternoon when the Spark reached the mouth of the Somerset, and leaving the great lake, entered the river.

The stream was only 500 yards wide at its mouth, but it contracted to half that width twenty miles up.

Strange to say there was but very little current at first but it was seen further on by the drifting of the little green water plants called pistia stratiotes.

Finally the river narrowed down to 180 yards, when our friends heard the roar of water sounding like distant rumbling thunder.

Ahead were some fishing huts at a point where the river made a turn,

Here our friends saw an extraordinary show of crocodiles exposed on every sandbank on the sides of the river.

The stream ran between towering walls of rock.

Rounding the bend, a magnificent sight burst upon them.

Beautiful wooded cliffs abruptly arose on either side of the stream, rocks jutting out from the intensely green foliage.

Rushing through a gap that cleft the rock exactly before the boat, 120 feet above the river, pent up in a narrow gorge roared furiously through the rockbound pass, and plunged in one leap down into the dark abyss where the Spark floated.

The fall was snow white, which had a grand effect, while the tall graceful palms and wild plantains perfected the beauty of the scene.

"Murchison Falls," commented Dr. Vaneyke.

"And our route now?" asked Frank.

"Look at that tributary to the left there."

"It comes with fearful force."

"Yes, because it runs down hill from the river above the fall."

"Do you suppose Driggs ascended that river in the Lioness?"

"He could very easily if he had a native guide."

Frank drove the boat into the tributary, and she was soon swallowed up in a dense mass of foliage.

She had scarcely vanished, when the negroes who had been running

after the Spark appeared on top of the cliffs armed with rocks to hurl down at the cruiser.

They failed to see her, however, and therefore abandoned the chase.

It proved as Dr. Vaneyke said; the tributary led them into the Nile above the fall, and the boat sped along swiftly.

She had a run of over three hundred miles now to reach Victoria Nyanza.

* There were numerous wooded isles along the course of the stream, and they had a heavy current to breast.

At Karuma, below Foweira, the river fell over a wall-like ledge which extended right across its bed.

This fall was five feet high, but the surrounding plain was flooded to a depth of four feet, and she easily regained the river by going around the rocky ledge.

On the following day the Ripon fall was encountered on the north side of Victoria Nyanza, coming down from a height of twelve feet over the rocks, about five hundred feet wide.

It was divided into sections by a number of wooded isles.

A number of wide, deep creeks also fed the river, and as the doctor pointed out one to Frank by means of which the Spark could easily reach the lake the young inventor quickly drove the boat through it.

She thus gained Victoria Nyanza.

Our friends were glad to leave the dark, ill-smelling waters of the Nile astern, with its monstrous reaches of *omm-suf* (woolly) grass and papyrus rising like a wall thirty feet above the water along the shore.

The level plains had only been broken at intervals by little mounds of earth tenanted by white ants and covered with brushwood and trees.

Mosquitos and flies had nearly maddened the crew of the Spark, and the moisture in the air had been so excessive as to reduce gunpowder to paste over one night.

Of course touches of beauty had not been wanting, for white, blue and crimson water lillies adorned the surface of the stream, while multitudes of fowl from the Egyptian duck and pelican to the rare and odd-looking *abu-markub* bred among reeds.

And at night a very firmament of fire flies lit up the dusky scene. Now all was changed.

The air of the vast inland sea spread before the cruiser was sweet and fresh, and they had no rapids, cataracts, or insects to trouble them.

The big lake laid in a zone where rain falls all the year around.

"Now, which direction shall we take, doctor?" asked Frank, as the boat ran out into Grant Bay.

"The gold mine lies on the western coast," replied the professor, "you will have to run down as far as Bambirsh Island. It is just opposite there, among the cliffs."

"What is the distance from here?"

"The lake measures two hundred and thirty miles from north to south, and two hundred and twenty from east to west. From here to Bambirsh Island is just one hundred and ninety five miles."

"We'll cover the distance by to-morrow morning."

"I hope so. But say—did I tell you of my discovery?"

"To what do you allude, sir?"

"I've also found a stream running down to Lake Tanganyika."

"You have?"

"Geographers know nothing about it yet. You know how meagre the explorations of this country have been. Well, from Tanganyika you can run south by a creek to Lake Nyassa, and from there by the Shire river into the Zambesi, and thus reach the ocean."

"Go completely through Africa by water?"

"Exactly."

"I shall do it."

"We'll emerge in the South Indian Ocean."

"Good! I'd rather not return the way we came."

The cruiser ran down the western shore of the big lake, and the shadows of night closed around her, clear and starlit.

It occurred to Frank that they must be pretty close upon the steamer Lioness now, for they had averaged twenty-five knots an hour from the time they left Readestown.

The steamship could scarcely have made more than half that time, and as the Lioness was reported seven days ahead of the Spark, it was more than probable that this lead had been made up.

A constant lookout was maintained to find her, as there was every reason to suppose that she reached this lake.

That night just before daybreak, the Irishman and the coon were on duty, and as Pomp held the wheel, Barney stood down on the forward deck gazing intently at the broad expanse of dark water ahead.

The coon glanced down at his friend, and a grin began to stretch his big mouth as he observed the Irishman's abstraction.

He fastened two wires to the poles of the battery, lowered them out the window, and deftly swung them so that they touched Barney's neck.

The Irishman received a terrific shock from the ends.

"Ouch!" he yelled, and he gave a jump that landed him on his back on the deck. "I'm shtabbed!"

Pomp could scarcely suppress his mirth.

He gave the wires a jerk that brought them up on the roof of the turret, and saw Barney glaring around in wild amazement.

The Irishman failed to see any one.

Slowly getting upon his feet, with a puzzled look on his face, he rubbed the spot where the wire touched him and muttered:

"Who did it at all, at all? Shure, I'm after havin' ther beautiful sinsation av a rooster whin it gits the ax."

He resumed his position under the impression that it might have been a sting from some kind of insect.

The coon was grinning from ear to ear by this time.

"Golly, what a roast!" he chuckled.

Then he waited until Barney was off his guard, and softly let down the electrified wire again.

It caught the Celt on the cheek this time.

He let out a roar, sprang back, clapping his hands to his face, and at the same moment discovered the wire going up in the air.

"Murdher in Irish!" he howled.

The truth of the matter had flashed across his mind.

For an instant he was inclined to go right up to the turret and wipe up the floor with the practical joker.

Upon second thought, however, he restrained this impulse.

"Bedad, it's ther nagur!" he reflected. "I'll be after polverozin' that gorilla wan av these days. It's shmart he thinks he is, but be this an' be that, I'll take ther swellin' out av his head!"

He did not let on to the coon that he had discovered the joke, but quietly slid inside, and ascending the turret to the wheel room he said in pleasant tones:

"It's places I'll shwap wid yer, pomp."

"Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho! Yah, yah, yah!" roared the coon.

"Is it a fit yez be's throwin'?"

"Gosh amighty, no," chuckled Pomp. "De fact am I gets taken dis way once in awhile, honey."

And chuckling over the success of his little joke, the coon gladly resigned the wheel to the Irishman and went down-stairs to take Barney's place, laughing till the tears ran from his eyes.

He posted himself in the bow, feeling greatly amused.

But the next moment down came a bucket of water upon his head, followed in quick succession by another and still another.

"Whoah!" roared the amazed coon, trying to dodge the shower. "Holy smoke! Wha' am dat? I—oh! ouch! De deluge hab come, fo' suah!"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!" yelled Barney, in a wild paroxysm of delight.

"What yo' laughin' at, yo' great big baboon?" roared Pomp, angrily.

"I'm after gettin' taken this way once in a whoile, me jewel!" roared Barney. "D'yey moind ther joke, hey?"

"Gosh blame yo', if I come up dar I'se gwine ter soak yer fo' dis!"

"Faix, it's yerself as has ther soakin'," laughed Barney.

There might have been trouble had not Pomp just then descried the lights of a ship athwart their course a mile ahead.

"Sail ho! Sail ho!" he roared, excitedly. "Looker dar!"

"Be heavens, it's a shtamer!" cried Barney.

Just then Frank and the doctor, aroused by their cries, came running up on deck.

The young inventor had a glass in his hand and leveled it at the vessel and saw the name.

"It's the Lioness!" he exclaimed.

CHAPTER X.

GOOD GUNNING.

It was evident now that Captain Driggs had not yet reached the gold mine, and a feeling of relief took possession of our four friends which they had not experienced in a long time.

It was then within an hour of daybreak.

Frank's companions were thrilled by what he said, and as soon as they recovered from their surprise Dr. Vaneyke asked:

"How do you know that steamer is the Lioness?"

"Because I see her name on the stern with this glass," said Frank.

"Arrah, but this is ther daent luck we're havin'," cried Barney.

"I fo'gib yc' de duckin', Bahney!" called Pomp to the Irishman.

"There will be war when we meet that craft," commented the inventor, "for Driggs will be enraged at the prospect of losing the gold when I order him to turn back."

"And no wonder after the long voyage he has been making to secure it," laughed the professor.

"Shall I be after shteerin' her, sor?" called Barney.

"By all means!" Frank assented.

"Gwine ter use de guns, sah?"

"If necessary, Pomp."

"Then we'll take charge of them," said the doctor.

"I'll remain on deck to speak to them!" Frank exclaimed.

Pomp went aft, and the old scientist entered the forward turret, both the guns were loaded, and Frank stood in the bow.

In a short time the Spark was close to the big flatbottomed steamer, and the inventor sung out:

"Turn the search-light upon her, Barney."

"Yis, sor," was the reply as he complied.

The dazzling light shot out through the gloom like a dagger and flooded the Lioness with its powerful glow.

A cry pealed from the watch on deck.

They rushed to the taftail and glared back.

But they could hardly see the Spark owing to the light.

Their cries brought up the whole crew, who shared the amazement of the dog watch.

Just then the electric cruiser hove up near the steamer.

"Lioness ahoy!" hailed Frank.

"Ahoy! Who is that?" came the reply in Driggs' voice.

"Frank Reade, Jr."

"Thunder!"

An interval of silence ensued.

The inventor smiled at the rascal's surprise.

He intended to increase Driggs' discomfiture soon.

"I say, captain!" he shouted.

"What do you want?" came the surly reply.

"Come about, and return to New York at once."

"Hey!" yelled Driggs, in furious tones.

"I've got a gun boat here to blow you to pieces!"

"Curse your impudence, do you mean to say—"

"Unless you obey me I'll sink your craft!"

"By heavens, this is too much!"

"You are a coward and a thief!" cried Frank, tauntingly.

"I'll make you prove those words!"

"No more proof is wanting besides what I saw with my own eyes at Readestown," Frank shouted. "You robbed Dr. Vaneyke, but I swear to you that you have had your journey for nothing. The doctor is with me, and we are here to assert, by the force of arms, our right to the gold claim!"

"You'll never get it," furiously yelled Driggs.

"But you are mistaken. It is you who will never—"

At this moment a loud report interrupted Frank, coming from a swivel gun on the deck of the steamer.

A ball came flying across the water and struck the forward turret within a foot of where Frank stood.

The shot glanced off with a metallic ring, and the doctor inside uttered a cry as he imagined the missile was coming through.

"Good shot!" coolly commented Frank.

"Faix, it's armed they be's!" cried Barney, in the turret.

And for safety he hastily closed the shutters over the windows.

"Dr. Vaneyke!"

"Well, Frank?"

"Fire!"

The shot was discharged.

It proved to be a good one, too.

Striking the taffrail of the Lioness it burst.

All the metal and wood work was torn to pieces.

Loud yells of pain, rage, and alarm rippled from the crew of the steamer, some of whom had been wounded.

"Good!" cried Frank. "Carry away her masts, doctor."

"I'll try, but I'm not much of a marksman," Vaneyke replied.

The glaring search-light left the entire mass of the steamer so plainly revealed that the old scientist had a plain target.

He fired the other shot.

It howled like a fiend as it left the gun.

Boom! roared the projectile as it burst.

A flying mass of splintered wood flew up in the air.

The yell of horror that escaped the crew attested to the alarm they entertained of the appalling pneumatic weapons.

Frank eyed the steamer.

Both of her masts were gone.

Several of the crew had been wounded, too.

"Doctor, you're an expert gunner!" cried Frank, delightedly.

"Blind luck!" laughed Vaneyke.

"Load the guns again."

"Very well."

"Ahoy there, Driggs!"

No reply was given.

The steamer had suddenly changed her course.

She now ran off to the eastward under a high pressure of steam, and Frank saw that his enemy had been put to flight.

"It's just as well!" muttered Frank.

"Shall I fire again?" asked the doctor.

"No. Let them live. They won't bother us much, I guess."

The Lioness soon afterward disappeared in the gloom, and an hour afterward the sun arose.

Pomp served breakfast, after which Frank took the wheel.

To the westward lay the Mountains of the Moon.

Dense, thorny jungles lined the coast in patches, and as the grass had dried up, conflagrations were seen.

A sheet of flame, beginning with the size of a spark, would spread over a hillside, advance on the wings of the wind with the roaring and rushing sound of many hosts.

Huge, forked tongues shot in the air where the great trees were caught, and it smouldered as it struck a line of rocks, then blazed and roared again, until, topping the brow of a hill, the sheet became a thin line of fire, and gradually vanished from view.

Bhang plants, arrow-root, palmillas, manioc and panicum flourished wild everywhere, and open, grassy plains were seen stretching away to the foot of the mountains.

Seesse Island was passed, on which dwelt a large tribe of negroes, and as they passed Kogera river, the doctor pointed at it and said:

"By that stream we can reach Lake Tanaganyika."

In the afternoon the boat glided past Alice Island.

It formed one of a large group of inhabited islets that lined the shore in that section, and the natives rushed waist deep in the water to look at the boat.

Bambirch Island was reached late in the afternoon.

It was large and densely wooded.

Like the rest of the isles, it contained a large population, and laid near the precipitous cliff lining the shore.

The Spark turned to the west.

Every one was expectant now for the goal was in view.

Running between the island and the main land, the boat was head-

ed toward a small bay at the head of which the mighty rocks were rent as if by some violent convulsion of nature.

Here she paused at a spot pointed out by the doctor, when a canoe containing a native shot out from a greek.

He paddled furiously to get away from the vicinage of the Spark of which he seemed to be in great dread.

The boat had arrived just abreast of the anchored cruiser, when it struck a rock and capsized, throwing the black man in the water.

To Frank's amazement, he saw that the native could not swim.

He was drowning.

To dive overboard was for Frank the work of a moment.

A few powerful strokes brought him up to the drowning man.

He seized him and held him up.

For a moment the negro struggled to get away, seemingly to prefer drowning to capture.

The young inventor firmly held him, however, and dragged him to the Spark, upon which the doctor, Barney and Pomp helped them, when it was seen that the negro's arm was broken.

He was the chief of the inhabitants of Bambirch Island, and had broken his arm by a fall in the rocks.

Upon seeing that no harm was intended to him he recovered from his panic and manifested the utmost gratitude to Frank for what he had done to save his life.

"Doctor, we ought to win the friendship of this fellow's people," said Frank, diplomatically.

"Shall I speak to him about it?"

"Do you understand their lingo?"

"When I was exploring this region I learned a smattering of the Uzinja dialect," answered Vaneyke.

"Then assure him of our everlasting friendship. Tell him we are after a cargo of gold, admonish him to protect us from the hostile tribes around here, and warn him that the crew of the Lioness must be kept away."

The doctor nodded assent and turned to the man.

The black chief had been listening to their strange language with a look of curiosity upon his face.

Vaneyke then addressed the negro, and the following dialogue ensued between them.

CHAPTER XI.

A GOLDEN HARVEST.

"Oh, my brother!" said Dr. Vaneyke to the chief, "we have come from the land of the *muzvngu mbaya* (wicked white men,) and they have followed us in a ship to kill us."

"You have escaped, white man, oh!" replied the chief.

"The white men are bad."

"They are wicked."

"They are very bad."

"The white men are very wicked."

"The white men are not good."

"They are not good."

"The white men are not all good."

"They are not all good."

"They will kill the Uzinja tribe."

"No, no!" fiercely said the chief.

"Truly so, oh my brother!"

"No! No!"

"And you must die at their hands."

"Ugh, ugh! Do not speak that way."

"It is the truth."

"Hoo, hoo! It is bad—very bad not to wear nice cloth again—never to dwell more with one's wives and children, not to eat, drink, snuff and smoke tobacco. Hoo, hoo! It is bad—very bad!"

"But your tribe can kill the wicked white men."

"They can kill the wicked white men."

"And you will be our friends?"

"We will be your friends."

"And permit us to carry away the yellow earth yonder?"

"We will permit you to carry away the yellow earth."

"And permit none of your tribe to attack us?"

"Oof!" grunted the chief, disdainfully. "Such *upumbafu!* (nonsense!)

"Good! We are then brothers."

"To-o-oh! Tuh! It is so."

"We shall now give you presents and safely land you on your island."

This proposition pleased the chief immensely.

After some further conversation the doctor embarked in one of the boats with the chief and rowed him over to the island.

He set the chief ashore, and while shaking hands to bid him goodbye, the doctor clutched a revolver with the other hand to shoot the negro down at the first sign of treachery.

Dr. Vaneyke knew from past experience that these African negroes are a very treacherous race.

To win his good will, the chief had been given a number of presents, which he esteemed highly.

Perhaps the most valuable in his estimation was a pound of sugar.

As a number of his men had come to meet him, the doctor wisely kept away from land, and rowed back to the Spark as speedily as possible.

The electric cruiser was left in charge of Barney and Pomp, and Frank embarked in the boat and rowed ashore with the doctor to inspect the gold lead.

Passing up into a cleft in the rocks, Frank and the old scientist followed the course of the creek out of which the chief had come for a short distance.

This ravine had been split in scores of places.

Entering one of these clefts, the doctor pointed at the wall on the right hand side in which ran a broad vein of gold.

"When these rocks parted asunder," said the scientist, "in consequence of an earthquake, perhaps, it left that vein of metal bare. You can see how valuable the ore is."

"Almost without alloy," commented Frank.

"There is a ship load of it in plain view."

"But little will be left for Driggs when we get through."

"Now, the question is how to get it."

"By blasting. We can convey it in the boats down this creek to the Spark without much trouble."

"Very well. Let us get to work the first thing to-morrow."

They then returned to the cruiser.

That night the Lioness hove in view.

The wisdom of having won the friendship of the Uzinja people was then shown, for they put out in their canoes and made such threatening demonstrations to Driggs' men that the villains instantly steamed away.

It gave them clearly to understand that the negroes had befriended Frank's party, and would not allow the steamer to approach anywhere near the gold mine.

On the following morning Frank returned to the gorge and began to drill along the top and bottom of the vein.

Dynamite cartridges were imbedded in the apertures, and then were connected with each other by electric wires.

They were exploded from the cruiser.

A roar that shook the earth ensued.

When our friends entered the cleft, they saw that not only the gold had been torn from its bed, but tons of quartz rock had also been blasted out.

Both boats were brought from the Spark.

All the ballast was taken out of the cruiser.

The work of loading the boats with the lumps of gold and conveying it to the ship then began.

Frank and the doctor attended to this, and the negro and Irishman remained aboard the Spark and stowed the ore away down below in place of the ballast.

In this manner half of the gold was secured.

"Our fortunes are made now, Frank," laughed the doctor.

"Yes, we will reap a rich harvest, doctor."

"About ten boat loads of the gold remain."

"We must keep right at it and finish the job to-night."

"The gloom is falling fast now."

"So I perceive."

They debarked from the boats in the creek.

Striding over to the cleft in the side of the gorge, they entered.

No sooner was this done than several men sprang at them and bore them to the ground.

They could not shout to Barney and Pomp and the strangers had taken care to grasp them by their throats.

A fierce struggle ensued.

Frank saw that the men were sailors.

They had Tom Driggs among them, and it occurred to Frank that the villains had landed somewhere down the coast, and made a circuit by land to the creek.

"Coming down the gorge from the landward they had escaped detection and therefore were enabled to get into the crevice unseen.

Despite the struggles of Frank and the doctor, they were soon overpowered, as each one had four men to contend with, and they had been taken by surprise without weapons.

"That settles it! They've got us now!" flashed across Frank's mind.

"Tie them hand and foot!" hissed Driggs.

"I'll blow their heads off if you say so," said one of the men.

"No. The shots will alarm their friends on the Spark!"

"But, sir—"

"We want the gold more than their lives."

"True, sir—true!"

"Set to work there with a will."

Frank and the doctor were gagged and bound and thrown on the ground utterly helpless.

Presently ten more of the sailors appeared.

They secured poles to the boats, filled them with the gold, and thus carried away load after load to their ship.

In this manner all the rest of the treasure was soon taken off, and our friends watched it disappear with feelings of the most intense dismay.

Shortly after the last load had thus been carried away, Tom Driggs returned with two men.

One of them he posted on watch in the creek.

The other accompanied him into the crevice where Frank and the doctor lay on the ground.

They carried revolvers in their hands.

They paused in front of the two prisoners, and with a savage look upon his face Tom Driggs exclaimed:

"We've come back to kill you!"

A shudder passed over the two prisoners upon hearing this.

They realized how entirely they were at Driggs' mercy.

"So wed id!" chimed in the captain's companion. "You've almost

ruined our ship with your guns, and you've made away with a good many of our messmates too."

It was now clear that vengeance was their motive.

In fact Frank suspected it before either of them said a word, for there was nothing else to bring them back.

He could not say anything though, on account of the gag.

"I ain't the kind of a man to let such injury as you've done me go unpunished," continued Driggs, with a scowl at Frank. "You must answer for it now. Not only have you done me injury but you've engaged in this expedition to cheat me out of the gold I was after. You've got half of it, but you won't live to enjoy it I can tell you. Now say your prayers!"

He cocked his pistol, and withdrew a few steps.

His companion followed his example, exclaiming:

"When we get through with you both, there won't be much left but food for the hyenas, I can tell you!"

Frank and the doctor exchanged pathetic glances.

They felt as if their doom was sealed.

No one was there to help them, for they could do nothing for themselves, bound and gagged as they were.

It gave them an awful feeling of horror.

"You take the doctor, and I'll fire at Reade," said Driggs.

"All right, captain," answered his companion.

"Run as soon as you shoot."

"What for?"

"The reports will bring their friends here."

"Very well, sir. I'm ready."

They both took deliberate aim at Frank and Vaneyke.

CHAPTER XII.

SEIZURE OF THE SPARK.

"RUN for your lives!" yelled the sentry, just then.

"What's the matter?" demanded Driggs, in startled tones.

"Here comes the nigger and the Irishman!"

Neither Driggs nor his companion dared to fire, in order not to let Barney and Pomp know they were there.

They dashed swiftly away, leaving Frank and the doctor unharmed and disappeared safely in the gloom.

Alarmed by the protracted absence of the scientist and the inventor, the Celt and the negro had armed themselves, and going overboard from the Spark swam ashore.

They suspected that trouble had befallen their friends and were anxious to investigate it.

Reaching the shore they left the lake, and fancied they saw several men running up the creek side.

"Begorry, it's mighty quare what's kapin' thim this lasht two hours widout bringin' a boat load av ther goold ter ther cruiser," commented Barney, in anxious tones. "Shure, they wouldn't do that unless somethin' dhrreadful detained 'em!"

"De boats amn't in de creek," remarked Pomp. "Yo' spes dey done rowed up de stream, Bahney?"

"Sorra a bit am I afther knowin'."

"Gwine ter look in de crevice fast!"

"Av coarse I am. Come ahead!"

They quietly stole forward into the gorge.

Night had fallen some time before, and the gloomy defile was much darker than it was on the open lake.

Both the coon and the Irishman held their weapons in readiness for use, and approached the gold mine.

Peering into the place they saw nothing of their friends nor did a sound break the stillness.

"They're not here!" said Barney.

"Whar dey gwine den?"

"Faix, can't yez ax aisiur conundhrums?"

"Oh, Lord! Dey mus' be dead!"

Frank and Dr. Vaneyke heard these remarks, but being gagged, could not utter a single syllable.

The young inventor was equal to the occasion, though, for he began to roll himself toward his friends.

They heard the sound, saw the shadowy outline of his body, and thinking it was a wild animal of some sort, they raised their pistols to fire at him.

"Ung-g-g!" cried Frank, through his nostrils.

It was too human a tone to be mistaken, and Barney cried:

"Don't fire! It's a mon!"

"Yo' was gwine ter fiah yo'se!.."

"No, I wuzn't; I wuz only foolin'."

"See who it am, chile."

The Irishman cautiously approached Frank.

When near enough, the inventor's identity was established.

"Bedad, it's Frank!"

"Golly Am he hurt, honey?"

"He's toied hand an' fut."

"Why doan' yo' loosen him den?"

And the darky cut the inventor's bonds.

He then saw Dr. Vaneyke and liberated him.

As soon as they had the gags out of their mouths they explained what had happened.

Barney and Pomp were furious.

"Lave us folly thim ter their ship!" cried the impetuous Irishman.

"No!" ordered Frank. "It would be folly to do so. By this time they are probably traveling over the lake. The steamer could not

have been far from here, as they quickly returned after carrying away the boat loads of gold."

"But dey hab got de boats!" said Pomp.

"After carrying away the last load of gold, of course they would not be accommodating enough to return the boats."

"We had better swim back to the Spark," said the doctor "we can then get aboard and pursue them."

"In this dense gloom?" asked Frank.

"True, it is a dark night, but we have the search-light."

No better plan could be devised, so they returned to the lake.

It was a short swim to the electric cruiser, and in a few minutes all hands got aboard and changed their clothes.

The anchor was then raised.

With her search-light blazing, the boat started.

Away she went upon the immense lake, and a long journey followed as they searched everywhere for the fugitive.

Nothing was seen of the Lioness, however.

She had made good her escape.

Two days were spent in searching for her.

Our friends were in despair.

On the third day they were in that part of the lake opposite Mesinda when Frank resolved to question the natives about the steamer.

There was a clearing studded with a large stockaded village, and peering over tall hedges of dark green milkbush, fields of maze and millet, manioc, gowds and watermelons were seen.

There were numerous flocks and herds of goats and oxen around shallow pits, and the houses were very much like hayricks or inverted funnels, being built of bamboo with thatched roofs.

As the boat drew near the shore swarms of men in loin cloths, and women bare to the waist, in knee long skirts, and naked children, rushed to the water's edge to stare at the Spark.

The women puffed pipes, the men had pieces of cane stuck through their ears, and all were gesticulating in strident explosions:

"Hi! hi! hui! ha, a, a! Beads! beads!"

The kirangozi (leader) fluttered a flag, and drums, horns and yells increased the uproar.

The people here were a fine, stout, light-complexioned tribe, but they each had two teeth pulled out; the pieces of cane in their ears looked like handles to their shaven heads, and while some were tattooed, others had their crowns stained with ochre and micaceous earths.

They believed in uchawi (black magic), and had waganga (medicine men) in less numbers than most tribes.

Although they seldom sold their children and relatives, they bartered salt, elephant tusks and rice with the Arab traders.

These people were drunken beggars shamelessly asking bori (alms), and were such inveterate thieves that they robbed even during the day.

Most of them carried broad-headed spears of soft iron, double-edged daggers with ribbed wooden handles, rungu, or wooden knob-kerris with double bulges, and pavoisa, or large hide shields.

It looked to Frank as if they meant war when he saw these weapons, but when the doctor explained what they said, the young inventor felt reassured, and exclaimed:

"Give them some presents, and ask if they saw the steamer."

There were large quantities of colored beads, brass jewelry, and other things of a like nature aboard, to possess which the African savages would risk their lives.

Dr. Vaneyke procured a lot of trinkets, and as the Spark neared the shore, he began to fling them among the blacks by the handful.

Instantly there was a wild scramble to get the things.

For awhile the excitement was intense.

When it had partially subsided, the doctor sung out:

"Where is the Kirangozi?"

"I am the chief," responded a man with many ornaments.

"We wish to ask a favor of you."

"Have you come to trade, white man?"

"No. We seek information about another big boat."

"One of my men has seen such a large canoe. There were, my brother, many of your tribe in it."

"Where did they go?"

"Into the Kogera river."

"They are enemies. When did your man see them?"

"Two moons ago. May you catch and kill them. But you cannot go from here yet. We would keep you with us."

"No, no! It cannot be," asserted the doctor.

He told his friends what was said.

"I presume they would hold us here until they got everything we have away from us," laughed Frank.

"Very likely," the doctor assented, grimly.

The chief now spoke to his men.

All hands dashed out into the water around the boat and a long line of buffalo hide was attached to her shaft.

Fifty men had hold of it.

"They mean to detain us!" cried Frank, in alarm.

"Start the boat, quick!" shouted the doctor.

Frank did so.

It was useless.

She could not move.

Many of the blacks had hold of her.

Besides these others held the buffalo thong.

Exerting their strength, they began to haul the Spark in to the shore, and she soon touched bottom.

Dr. Vaneyke rushed inside the turret, and shut the door just as a number of the blacks climbed upon the deck.

"Arrah, they've caught us!" roared Barney.

"Gwine ter be a fight?" anxiously asked Pomp.

"I don't believe they intend to do more than rob us," said the doctor.

"All hands come up here!" shouted Frank.

Wondering what he wanted, they ascended to the wheel-house. The inventor had grasped a rifle, and opened one of the after bulk's eyes, and was pointing the weapon out the hole.

"Going to fire at them?" asked the professor.

"No; going to try to cut the rope with a ball," Frank replied.

"Excellent! Capital! But they are holding her with their hands, too."

"Oh, I can very easily chase them away."

As Frank spoke, he fired.

He was a magnificent shot, for the bullet severed the line as cleanly as a knife could have done it.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BROKEN MOTOR.

A SHOUT from the natives attested to their displeasure upon seeing the line severed, and the negroes who were pulling on the other end of it toppled over in the water.

Frank then secured an insulated wire to the battery post, turned a heavy current into it, and lowered it out the window to the deck.

The steel plates quickly drained the current from the wire, and the negroes who were on the deck and clutching the sides fell it.

Howls and whoops escaped them.

Overboard sprang the ones on the Spark.

Those who held her let go as soon as the current broke.

Everyone rushed away from her as if she were a pestilence, for the water drew the current from the hull and became saturated.

Quick to act, Frank started the screw.

Away dashed the boat at the top of her speed into deep water, and she was soon beyond the reach of the Uzinjas.

"It's all right now," laughed Frank.

"By George, that was a happy thought!" chuckled the professor.

"De riber Kogera ain't far from heab, am it?" queried Pomp.

"Three miles," replied the doctor.

"Sich ongrateful blackguards as thim coons I niver see," said Barney. "It's no wonther we can't trusht Pomp, for ther devil is a descindint av this thrible, be heavens!"

"Clar out ob dis!" growled Pomp. "Yo' mean fo' ter say Ise a wild sabage like dem yere chimpanzees? No, sah. Dis chile come from good ole stock in the Soul."

"Thim is ther Kaffirs an' ther dirt eaters."

"Shut up, yo! I mean in de United States."

"How eud I be after makin' sich a misstake?" grinned Barney.

The boat soon reached the Kogera and ran into it.

She had not followed the shallow stream more than a mile when Frank espied a row boat drifting against the shore.

He recognized it immediately as one of his own which Driggs' men had used to carry away the stolen gold.

He pointed it out to his friends.

"There's undeniable evidence that the Lioness passed along this stream," he remarked to his friends.

"Better get her boat, we may need it," said Barney.

"I'll haul it over with a boat hook!" said the doctor.

Frank ran the Spark as close to shore as he dared, and Dr. Vaneyke caught the boat and they got it upon the davits.

Then the cruiser continued on.

She had a run of several hundred miles that day in order to get down into the hollow valley in which lake Tanganyika laid.

It was all down hill.

Toward the last stage of the journey the slant of the river which had now narrowed down to a width of only fifty feet was frightful.

It passed between the steep walls of a deep canyon.

Here the water roared, boiled and flew along over the steep declivity several miles in length with a speed and impetuosity that was frightful.

There was no stopping her then.

She plunged on like a ball shot from a gun in the frothy water passing between jutting snags to strike one of which meant certain destruction.

On, on she raced, every moment gathering speed until she was going with the velocity of a lightning express train.

It was frightful.

Every one on board expected she would strike.

Several moments of awful suspense thus passed by.

Then suddenly she dashed into the big, long, narrow lake.

The shadows of night had begun to fall, but it did not veil the grand view from the eyes of our relieved friends.

A ribbon of yellow sand surrounded the lake, here bordered by sedgy rushes, there cleanly and clearly cut by the breaking waves.

It was a vast expanse of lightest and softest blue.

On the sides were broken walls of steel colored mountains flecked and capped by pearly mist, and standing sharply penciled against the sky.

The yawning chasms, marked by a deep, plum color fell toward some dwarf hills that dipped their bases in the waves.

A cluster of islets dotted the water on the horizon, villages, canoes of fishermen, and cattle were seen on the shores and inland.

The inhabitants of this region were the Wajiji, a burly race of barbarians with very dark skins, independent, insolent, brutal and very rough in their manners.

As the Spark glided along over the bosom of the lake our friends were treated to a curious exhibition of the gambols of lakists residing in a village near the shore.

They were almost an amphibious race.

They stood upright, balancing themselves in their dug out canoes, then they would furiously strike the water with their paddles, skimming over the surface, dashing to and fro, splashing one another, and acting like lunatics.

Capsizing their tiny canoes, they would regain their upright position with the wonderful dexterity of an Esquimau in his kyack.

Rough and tumble fights ensued in the boats, they pushed each other, tore each other's hair out, and not infrequently used their daggers upon each other's naked bodies merely in sport.

These watermen, called wana maji, when paddling, accompanied it with a long, melancholy howling, and where there were several in a long boat, the men in the bows incessantly banged tom-toms, brayed on horns and yelled themselves hoarse.

On shore they were habited in mbugus, tigered with black stripes and tailed like leopard skins, while their waists, wrists and ankles, knob sticks, spears and daggers were bound with rattan bark.

When they saw the cruiser go by their eyes bulged from their sockets with intense amazement at the unusual sight, and they screamed and howled at her furiously.

It was lucky our friends were out of their reach and going fast, for many of them swam and paddled their canoes after the cruiser in a vain effort to catch her and extort presents from her occupants.

The boat was then on the longest fresh water lake in the world, as it measured 420 miles in length, and had a breadth of from 10 to 50 miles, its depth was 170 fathoms, and it was bordered by mountains 10,000 feet high.

On the following morning, as the Spark glided along the western shore, her crew saw numberless crocodiles, hippopotamus, and otters, the jungle was alive with gulls, divers herons and black ibis, and gigantic mbulo, mininga, and ebony trees rose from the ground.

Swarms of tsetse flies were encountered, ten different tribes of negroes lived on the shores, and among them was the Arabian trading post of Ujiji.

"A serious question arises in my mind now," said the doctor to Frank that morning, as they sat in the cabin.

"You look troubled. What is the matter, sir?"

"Is it your intention to proceed home?"

"Not until I overhaul the Lioness, and wrest the gold from Captain Driggs, which he stole from us."

"That's just the trouble."

"How do you mean, doctor?"

I "Why, I'm in doubt how to go now. That the Lioness is in this lake there is not the shadow of a doubt. But it is hard to say whether we can catch her or not. Now she may proceed to the stream that leads to Lake Nyassa, or he may escape to the western coast of Africa by the River Lukuga."

"How do you mean, sir?"

"It is now an established fact that this river, at the center of the western shore of the lake, is a tributary of the Congo river which empties the lake into that mighty stream. Now as the captain of the Lioness has a native pilot aboard who is accustomed to the lake system of this continent, it is a matter of doubt as to whether he will go to Nyassa or to the Congo."

"This we must find out."

"Yes, before we pass the Lukuga."

"What is the location of the river?"

"It lies in 5 degrees, 52 minutes, 45 seconds south latitude, Frank."

"Then we must be very close to it, sir."

Frank now posted Barney up in the crow's nest with a glass, and by noon time the Celt discerned the stream.

When they reached it, some fishermen were seen living in bee hive huts at the mouth of the river, and our friends hailed them.

Their good will was purchased with the last of the trinkets, and the professor asked them about the steamer.

To their delight they discovered that the Lioness had gone into the river on the preceding day.

"By jingo, it was lucky you happened to think of this stream," said Frank to the old scientist. "If you hadn't, we might have gone all the way to the south of the continent without overtaking them after all."

"They probably imagine they have given us the slip," laughed the doctor. "It won't take long to overhaul them now."

The cruiser left the lake astern, and plunged into the river which she followed to the westward.

She sped on until she reached the Congo, and followed that great watercourse as far as Bonga before they saw the Lioness.

It was late in the afternoon.

She was speeding along under a full pressure of steam, and as the Spark rushed into view of her crew, a despairing yell burst from their lips.

A rush was made for their swivel gun, and they loaded it and fired it at the electric cruiser.

The ball crashed through one of the sternmost windows and struck the propeller motor.

It smashed the engine to pieces.

Instantly the cruiser paused.

She had no power to go on any further.

A wild yell of exultation pealed from Driggs' crew.

They had been afraid our friends would take the gold away from them, and now saw that they had disabled the Spark.

It imbued them with fresh courage, and the Lioness sped on rapidly, leaving the stationary electric boat astern.

CHAPTER XIV.

CONCLUSION.

"By heavens, they've disabled the cruiser, boys!"

"An' dey am escapin', Marse Frank."

"This won't do; we must not let them get away."

"Baste 'em wid a gun."

Thus cried the four friends on the Spark.

Frank saw that unless something were done at once Tom Driggs would get away with the stolen gold.

He therefore rushed into the forward turret, loaded a gun and fired a shot at the Lioness.

The projectile exploded against the stern of the steamer, tore her rudder to pieces and smashed the screw.

A cheer burst from the inventor's friends, for they at once observed the extent of the damage done to the Lioness.

"You have crippled her, Frank," cried the doctor.

"I'll make her crew sick now," cried the inventor.

Then he discharged the other gun and a second shell sped away.

It struck the port side of the Lioness, smashing in her plates, and the wind bore a wild yell from her crew back to the ears of our friends.

"Hurroo!" yelled Barney. "They're afther takin' ter ther boats."

"Gosh amighty, dot took all de spunk out ob dem!" chuckled Pomp.

"Dey's gwine ter desert de steamer."

"If they do," grimly said Frank, "the gold is ours."

"Give them another shot, my boy," cried Dr. Vaneyke.

Frank reloaded the guns and sent the third missile flying toward the disabled steamer.

It tore the upper part of her bow to pieces.

The Lioness had already been dismantled, and now presented a ruined appearance.

Her crew had lowered the boats and embarked.

Some of the men had been injured by the shots and now laid on the deck.

Their companions were too frightened to carry them off in the boats, but left them behind.

Away went two of the boats across the Congo, carrying the uninjured men ashore, and the steamer was left deserted in the river.

Upon seeing this, Frank shouted:

"Lower away the quarter-boat and tow the Spark down to the steamer."

Barney and Pomp carried out this order.

A towing hawser was made fast to the boat, and they rowed down stream, dragging the Spark after them.

She soon reached the steamer and was tied up to her side.

Frank and the doctor went aboard.

The first person they saw was the captain.

He was wounded and lay upon the deck groaning and swearing, and the moment he saw his two enemies he burst into a violent paroxysm of rage, cursed Frank in the most malignant language, and then yelled:

"I owe all this trouble to you!"

"You can thank yourself for it," coldly answered Frank. "What right did you have to rob us?"

"Oh, if I were able to get up I'd pay you off!" yelled the captain.

"You've nearly killed me and ruined my ship!"

"I'll soon have the gold out of the Lioness too," said Frank.

"Now, doctor, let's tie the rascals up."

There were half a dozen injured men on the deck, and they quickly bound them despite their protests.

Once they were secured, Frank called Barney and Pomp, and they set to work taking the gold out of the hold of the steamship and stowing it in the Spark.

While this was going on they caught occasional glimpses of the crew on shore watching them.

In a few hours all the gold was transferred.

Our friends then made an examination of the broken motor.

Nothing further could then be done as night had fallen, but on the following morning Frank gathered the remains of the machine and manufactured a new one of them.

It would do to carry them home.

When Frank tried the machine, and found that it operated as he wished, he returned to the steamer's deck.

"I am going to leave you now, Tom Driggs," said he to the captain. "I would be justified in putting you in irons, and carry you back home with me to stand trial in court for your misdeeds. But as I consider that you have been well punished, I will relent and leave you here."

"You are very kind!" sneered the ugly captain.

"Of course I did not expect you to appreciate what I have done to keep you out of a merited prison cell. But then I did not think you was capable of feeling grateful. You are too brutal to do so."

"We'll perish if you leave us tied up."

"Oh, your crew are all lurking in the shrubbery along the shore, and will very likely come aboard after we are gone. You therefore need have no alarm on that score."

"Can't you cut these bonds?"

"Well, it can't do any harm."

And as Frank said this he drew a knife and severed the marline that bound the man's wrists together.

No sooner had he done this when Driggs thrust his hand in his hip pocket, pulled out a revolver and shot at Frank.

The young inventor was taken off his guard.

He uttered a cry of pain and staggered back.

"Traitor! You've shot me!" he gasped.

"I'll kill you!" screamed the captain.

He raised the pistol to fire again, but ere he could carry out his threat Pomp rushed up behind him and struck up his arm when the bullet was waisted in the air.

Driggs uttered a cry of rage and disappointment.

He turned savagely upon the coon, but Pomp sprang at him head first, butted him in the stomach and knocked him down.

The pistol flew out of his hand and he gasped for breath.

"Hurt you bad, Massa Frank?"

"Only a scalp wound."

"Ise got him down."

"Bind him."

"Yes, sah."

"Put him on the Spark."

"What yo' gwine ter do?"

"Carry him home and put him in prison."

A yell of alarm escaped Tom Driggs.

He lost all his bravado now.

Pomp quickly tied him up again.

"Spare me!" he groaned.

"Curl!" contemptuously said Frank, his lip curling.

He paid no heed to the entreaties of the captain, but went aboard the Spark, and Pomp dragged Driggs aboard the cruiser, shackled him, and confined him in the store-room.

The mooring lines were then cast off.

Having dressed his wounds, Frank started the cruiser down the Congo, leaving the half ruined Lioness behind.

Glancing back, he saw that his prediction was correct.

The crew who escaped to the shore returned to the steamer in the boats when they saw the Spark going away.

What became of the men and the steamer after that our friends never knew, for they never saw either again.

The four were delighted over their success.

"We've got every bit of the gold now," said Frank.

"And the villain who injured us," grimly added the doctor. "I will feel better satisfied with that wretch in prison."

"Although we did not make a journey through Africa in the course we expected to follow, we certainly have gone through the Dark Continent by water," laughed Frank.

"How much do you suppose our cargo of gold is worth?"

"No less than two millions of dollars, doctor."

"It was a prize worth winning."

"Oh, we can't complain."

The electric cruiser reached the mouth of the Congo on the following day, and the broad Atlantic was seen ahead.

She then glided out into the ocean.

A long and pleasant voyage followed.

It was only marred by one disagreeable incident.

Tom Driggs committed suicide.

By some means he gained possession of a knife, and fixing it so that its point stood upward, he fell upon the blade.

It pierced his heart, and must have killed him instantly.

Our friends were saved the trouble of prosecuting him, and the miserable wretch was buried into the ocean.

In due course of time the Spark reached America, and while approaching the river leading to Readestown she ran on a rock.

Frank beached her before she could founder.

The gold was landed, and her contents were saved, but a violent storm arising the next night smashed her to pieces.

Her remains were swept out to sea and litter the bottom now.

Having procured conveyances, Frank had the gold and effects carried to Readestown, and there they were sold.

A magnificent sum of money was realized, which the four friends equally divided.

Then Dr. Vaneyke took leave of Frank, Barney and Pomp and returned to Washington.

The young inventor soon after conceived of another idea for the construction of a new invention.

Confiding the plan to Barney and Pomp, it met with their approval, and he resolved to build the machine.

A model was perfected, and as it proved to be successful, the three friends set to work to build a large machine like it.

This invention was destined to be a wonderful triumph, and the three friends were fated to experience some of the most thrilling events when they put it into practical use.

It shall be our good fortune to give an account of their adventures with the invention in a new story to appear in this series next week, and until we meet Frank and his friends again we must draw the curtain.

[THE END.]

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